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## Book Review: Fred Busch: "The Analyst's Reveries. Exploration in Bion's Enigmatic Concept" (Routledge, 2019) --Manuscript Draft--

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**Key words**: Reverie, transformation, dream thoughts, pictogram

In the clinical method it is our aspiration – in as a candid way as possible – to commit ourselves to our internal world, and this is the legacy of Freud. This so-called Fundamental rule applies not only to the patient, but is also very much true of the analyst. Freud wrote in 1912: "...the doctor must put himself in a position to make use of everything he is told for the purposes of interpretation and of recognizing the concealed unconscious material..." (1912, p. 114). Freud also made use of the now well-known metaphor of two unconscious minds, to illustrate the sensitivity in the meeting between two persons, the analyst and analysand: "he must turn his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient. He must adjust himself to the patient as a telephone receiver is adjusted to the transmitting microphone." (1912, 114-115). This inner receptiveness which may function as a sort of resonance to capture impulses and mental states, both within us and from the analysand, forms my preconception of that which these days is known as "reverie". It makes up the first step before we can formulate assumptions about what we believe is taking place, and the point in time in which it can be done. It is only once we have personally experienced within us a feeling, or spontaneously gained access to an impulse or association, that we have a compass enabling us to propose a thought, to try out on the patient.

Fred Busch has now written a new book "The Analyst's Reveries. Exploration in Bion's Enigmatic Concept" (Routledge, 2019) which inquires into the roots of reverie and makes a thorough review of different writers' views on the use of reverie by psychoanalysts. Fred Busch, who is a Training analyst at Boston's Psychoanalytic Institute, has previously published around 70 articles and several books, one of the latter being "Creating a psychoanalytic mind" (2013). The new book continues in the same vein and creates a space for reflecting on psychoanalytic techniques with its focus on the concept of reverie, based on how Bion defines the term, and the way in which this has been picked up and put to use by various predecessors within the post-Bionian tradition. The origins of this inspiring and thought-provoking book is to be found in a discussion led by Cláudio Eizirik on the subject of Freud Busch's plenary lecture at the IPA conference in Boston, in 2015. In connection with an hour-long session, which the analyst experienced as mechanical and also repetitive and dull, an image forms in the mind of the analyst of two kids in a bathtub, covered in soap suds and trying to grip one another at the same time the properties of the soap causes them to slip out of each other's grasp. The image depicts the analyst's interaction with the analysand; in a similar

way they fail to connect. Fred Busch thinks "I hope the analyst doesn't share this image with the analysand", but to his surprise this is precisely what the analyst does, and the result is that they make a connection. This prompts Fred Busch's impulse to explore in greater depth the idea of "reverie" and how it is viewed by different writers. It's not easy to explore a psychoanalytic concept such as the analyst's reveries, as it has become for so many of us a natural way to understand our patients. Once an idea has been shown to have clinical value the emphasis must be to examine its utility, but he also concludes that critical examination at this point appears mostly to cease. Grotstein sums it up: "Of all Bion's new ideas, that of reverie seems to be acquiring the most cachet as an instrument of technique". Ferro goes so far as to suggest that reverie provides an essential new basis for thinking about the methods and goals of treatment: "we have to defend ourselves from what we already know: all that is known should not interest us anymore". So are we witnessing a paradigm shift within psychoanalytic technique?

One question that has pursued Fred Busch through his exploration of the concept of "reverie" has to do with what happens when a psychoanalyst with a divergent theoretical perspective tries to discuss and delve more deeply into a concept used within another tradition. He borrows his solution to this philosophical-scientific quandary from Ogden and his study of Susan Isaacs' contribution: "I have a mind of my own, and that allows me to see in her work a good deal that she did not see. The same thing is true for you the reader, in reading Isaac and in reading what I write".

The book consists of two parts. The first part explores Bion's definition of "reverie". In order to throw light upon the complexity of the term Fred Busch chooses to explore in greater detail the Rocha Barros couple's, then Ogden's and Ferro's view of the analysts's use of "reverie". The second half of the book explores the clinical utility of the concept, but also its limits.

Bion's contribution to the term is very sparse and in the spirit of Bion also preserves its enigmatic quality. Only a few sentences from his book "Learning from experience" – referring to the mother-child relationship – are here under consideration. The metaphor for the mother's capacity to inwardly relate to the feelings of the child, is the digestive function. The mother's capacity for reverie has a decisive impact on her ability to receive the child's projections and anxieties. If the mother does not have this capacity for reverie, or if reverie can anyway be achieved but is unconnected to any feeling of love for the child, this will be communicated to the child in an unprocessed form with the result that the child is incapable of comprehending it. Bion describes reverie as a factor of the mother's alpha function. Fred Busch quotes Levine and Reed who have written that Bion, in his definition of reverie, has

perhaps come up with a method for comprehending the mind of the analyst alongside that of the patient, but that there are no rigorous clinical examples, or specific technical recommendations, in his texts. Fred Busch, who has made a close reading of Bion's clinical seminars in Brazil and Los Angeles, concedes that Bion in the supervision groups has made no reference to the analyst's reverie, nor does he report any of his own inner images during the clinical seminars. Bion's technique is in the main part Kleinian and his contributions are aimed at exposing concealed psychotic issues in the patient, of which the presenter appears to be unaware.

Fred Busch asks the slightly provocative question of whether Bion is actually Bionian, arguing that Bion thus leaves an opening for later, post-Bionians to develop their own understanding of the analyst's reverie. There is no entirely consistent line of thought on reverie among these, more of a variety of perspectives from different practitioners.

Of the three, the ones closest to Fred Busch in their understanding of the analysts's reverie are the da Rocha Barros couple, of whom I know the least. Da Rocha Barros restrict their thinking about reverie to dream-like, *emotionally charged* images, which take the analyst by surprise. They call these images affective pictograms, to illustrate that they are primitive types of representations of strong emotional experiences that have previously not been properly grasped, or understood. Da Rocha Barros' idea is that these pictograms make up a first step in a transformational process. Verbal representations are the next step, which enables the freeing up of emotional experiences and making them accessible to thought.

Here Da Rocha Barros differs from Ogden and Ferro, in his later years, who both argue that the fact that the analyst enters into a state of reverie is transformative in itself. A pictogram in itself is for da Rocha Barros insufficient to reveal anything, rather we may grasp its meaning at a later stage when we are able to trace the origins of the dream image. Ogden does not wish to limit the concept of reverie to occasional dream images that arise spontaneously, instead it's for him an umbrella term that encompasses the analyst's *total inner state* which might include such things as somatic expression, dream thoughts and countertransference responses. Based on his own theoretical perspective Ogden rarely analyses his countertransference responses: "Rather I conceive the analytic process as involving the creation of *unconscious intersubjective events* that have never previously existed in the affective link of either analyst or analysand". What Fred Busch considers is missing in Ogden's view of reverie is this very bypassing of the underlying *dynamic meaning* of the analyst's reverie. In Ogden's words: "... it is misleading to view [the reveries] as "our" personal creations, since reveries is at the same time an aspect of a jointly (but asymmetrically) created unconscious intersubjective

constructions that I have named "the intersubjective analytic third"..." Where Ogden sees reverie Fred Busch is considering the countertransference responses that must be analysed for the purpose of understanding their meaning in the interaction with the analysand, and ultimately in the dynamic conflict within the analysand. Reveries in Ogden's interpretation becomes an end in itself: "For Ogden, the analyst's reveries themselves affect the analytical relationship and transforms the patient's thinking. Reveries just are." Fred Busch argues that Ogden doesn't seem to be interested in understanding the feelings and thoughts that the patient communicates to the analyst, unless they are in the form of a dream to be understood as a direct response to the analyst's dream thinking.

Ferro, who is known for the notion of "unsaturated interpretations" and his thoughts about "field theory" is the most radical of the three. He adheres to the notion that thinking about reverie as a curative factor within the treatment entails a paradigm shift. Even though he doesn't share Ogden's view of reverie as encompassing countertransference relations, Fred Busch's impression is that Ferro's interpretations emanate from the analyst's evenly suspended attention. Interpretation is for him characterized as being "replaced by the activities of the analyst, which activate transformations in the field, transformations which can also derive from the changing of the analyst's mental state from minimal interventions that function almost as enzymes". Also changes in the analyst's mind after a session may contribute to transformation in the patient, according to Ferro: "A kind of satellite navigation system dreams in real time what takes place in the analyst's consulting room after an interpretation need not in my view necessarily be interpreted, but it can also be used to facilitate the development of the field". Busch's main critique of Ferro is that the field theory has the consequence of a patient's dream not being interpreted from the point of view of the patient's associations around it. Instead Fred Busch states that Ferro takes the manifest content as part of the patient's psychic field, and treats it as a *direct statement* about the transference.

The second part of the book discusses and questions above all Ogden's and Ferro's view that all reveries are entirely co-constructed. The contribution of the patient and the analyst's role in reverie are kept deliberately vague. The analyst's responsibility for their own thoughts seems to be irrelevant. The interaction is viewed as part of the intersubjective analytical third (Ogden) or of the common field (Ferro) that give rise to a new entity larger than the sum of its subjective parts. Fred Busch is clear that it is our task as analysts to process any countertransference – the self-reflecting silent work – experienced by the analyst at the given time, and subsequently. It's not enough to understand *what* is happening within us, rather *why* the various emotional states and dream thoughts emerge. Notions such as role-responsiveness

and projective identification are discussed, in which case the analyst's task is to apprehend the contribution of the patient for the various emotional states or roles being assigned to themselves. Another aspect that Fred Busch considers is the time perspective. Within the framework of a session we may experience all kinds of associations and responses, but certain associations may be seen as background noise and can be left to one side, to then at a later point be reintegrated as an opening occurs in the ongoing transference and countertransference relation. Fred Busch's own thoughts closely follow Britton's description of the third position for which the analyst strives, on the one hand to commit fully through subjective participation with the analysand, but also in parallel to engage in self-observation during that which transpires, and to apprehend roles that we may be taking on from the patient's inner world.

Fred Busch in his book examines the question which he initially posits, that is whether it is meaningful to discuss and consider in depth a concept used within a tradition different from one's own. Having read the book it's fair to say that Fred Busch retains the curiosity and candour necessary to set about the multivalent meanings of a concept as hard to define as reverie, at the same time he explores the issues in an acute and open manner and emphasises the shifting consequences which result from the differing ways of viewing the notion of reverie. He maintains the psychoanalytic attitude which he sometimes sees as lacking in the various contributions to the understanding of the subject – to frankly and with an open mind approach and examine one's own experience. It's a book which addresses a vacancy for those interested in contemporary psychoanalytic technique and assumes a natural place in the psychoanalytic training.

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Translation Magnus Koch 2019/12/02

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