

## HYDRONTOLOGY

Jaime del Val  
Madrid, Spain

Jaime del Val's performance on the Tap for the Waterwheel Symposium included the following text as spoken discourse:

"Since the practice of HYDROMANCY in the ancient world, water has been linked to ontologies of becoming, to an understanding of life as a formless process of emergent movement.

According to Archeologist Luis Siret, the drawings of swirls or spirals that pervade ancient middle eastern and mediterranean cultures before the Phoenicians were attempts to understand, learn or read the movement of water, considered the sacred element, because it embodied the movement and transformative becoming of the world more visibly than any other element.

Water transforms visibly from fluid to solid or gaseous states. Water and humidity seem visibly related to life in all its forms. The ancient naturalist cosmogonies and religions saw in water the sacred force of life before it acquired any animal or human form.

Only later did the deities acquire the form of those animals that moved more like water, such as snakes or horses, and only later did they become fixed into a fully human form. Ancient deities were natural forces and amongst them water embodied the creative forces of formless movement more than any other force.



The Babylonian and Egyptian creation myths placed in the different kinds of water the origin of the world. In homeric epic it is the oceans from which the world was created. Tales from Miletus, acknowledged as the first scientist and philosopher, described water as the principle of the Cosmos, from which all things are constituted or derived.

Water was considered to be alive, because it moves, because of how it dances (hylozoism). As in animistic cultures, where life is not a privilege of certain species, a more ecological worldview.

In pre-socratic philosophy the principle of eternal motion runs through Anaximander's àperion or indeterminate principle, and through Anaximenes's principle of air, and Heraclitus' principle of fire, as well as through atomism and Anaxagoras's compound seeds.

Water reappears in Heraclitus' most famous saying that "we cannot step twice in the same river." His disciple Cratylus radicalized this vision saying that we cannot step even once, since while we step, the river is changing and so are we, a denial of the principle of identity and a radical ontology of becoming.

Parmenides introduced for the first time the idea of an immobile world, denying movement and splitting the world of the senses from the intellect. Plato did not deny movement as Parmenides did but placed it as illusory with regard to the world of eternal and immobile forms. Aristotle brought back movement as immanent to matter and form, but subjected to the latter, where form is the immobile principle and the teleology of movement.

Euclidean geometry fixed vision along infinite lines, Renaissance perspective fixed perception in algorithmic vision, mechanicism in functions, liberalism in property, so that now water is perceived as an objectified commodity.

Commodification is a form of engineered and abstract perception that consolidated in ancient cultures with the birth of money when value of use shifted to value of exchange and goods become abstractions. Yet it is only more recently that the perception of water as commodity has emerged.

The increasing expansion of dualistic worldviews, in which the subject is distinct from its environment relates to the perceptual techniques developed since the birth of geometry, through perspective to cartesianism, which are conditions of possibility of commodification, since they produce the perception of reality as external and appropriable.



Fig.1 & 2 Jaime del Val during his pperformance. Screen captures.

But in the XXth century, physics, biology, cognitive sciences and ecology have provided a radically relational view of the world. Complexity theories and quantum mechanics show the non-linear turbulent and emergent processes in which the world moves, a process of becoming, not of change, since as physicist Ilya Prigogine said, "change is the denial of becoming," since it assumes that things are what they are and only move between given states. But things are in becoming and move towards what is not yet.

While Quantum Mechanics has shown the interdependence of observer and observed, Lynn Margulis' biological theories of endosymbiosis show evolution as process of radical interdependence and cooperation amongst

species.

Cognitive theories of enaction, the expanded mind, embodiment and proprioception, to name but a few, point to how thinking and consciousness itself are distributed processes that emerge from relations of movement constituting at the same time the subject and the world.

Current biology acknowledges largely the origin of life in water, as the first unicellular organisms developed over three billion years ago. For over two billion years life evolved in the turbulence of the oceans where bacteria generated the biosphere, the atmosphere and gave birth to multicellular organisms through hypersexual experimentation.

According to Lynn Margulis we are offsprings of the hypersexual experimentation of bacteria in the oceans.

The HYPERSEA theory by McMenamin proposes that what we perceive as individuated living organisms are part of a flowing metabody of water that emerged as life transferred from the oceans to the land. Our intimate watery encounters, the humidity of sex, is an echo of the originary life in the ocean, and water would be the continuous metabody that links organisms in land, a waterflow of life across the organisms, of flowing currents of a Water-body of the Earth.

We need a change in perception that shifts our focus in things and elements as external and appropriate distinct entities, to how we are immanent part of larger metabodies of relations, diffuse movement relations at all scales and modes of existence.

Water constitutes some of the metabodies we are part of.

An affordance, following James Gibson is a potential for interaction, the disponibility of something in the world, yet affordances emerge and transform in multiple collective movement relations across long periods of time. The affordance of a glass for drinking water, the affordance of an instrument for measuring the quality of water, the affordance of water itself as commodity are effects of movement relations with an environment, of perceptual movements.

Through radical commodification of water we are not only limiting the access to water, but also exponentially increasing its poisoning at a planetary scale, with the waste in the oceans, the contamination of rivers and subterranean water, or of the very water that constitutes our bodies.

The capitalistic and imperialistic idea of water as a resource, as property (even if common property) is killing water and the possibility of a relational ontology of becoming. But water cannot be property, not even shared, public or common property.

How to regain an onto-epistemology of indeterminate becoming that allows to decommodify not only water but all spectrums of existence?

A HYDRONTOLOGY would be an ontology of becoming that takes the movement of water as reference for a relational and emergent rethinking of the world, for an ecology to come. This onto-epistemology wouldn't be about fluid form, but about the ongoing metamergence of the amorphous, which implies a new mode of perception.

Metabodies are bodies of movement in permanent becoming, like the water from which we come and of which we are made, in its complex heterogeneous compounds, its indeterminate movements.

Hydrontology is a politics of intimacy, of fluid contacts in motions across bodies, of bodies without form that run across the bodies.

Hydrontology speaks of the caress of water as a posthuman affect.

Hydrontology is microsexual.

Microsexes are emergent bodies-affects-desires-movements in permanent formation that never actualize in a form, amorphogenetic hydrontological bodies, diffuse affordances for an openended world of indeterminacy.

Hydrontology speaks of bacterial affect. Bacteria, who have generated the biosphere and the ecosystems of the planet. Bacteria, who are the hope of this nihilistic, so called “human” species, if it arrives to extinction and environmental destruction.

We must disalign perception from all the dominant perceptual alignments, of geometry, perspective and coordinates of control, in order to facilitate new ecologies of relational becoming that foreground open ended movement.

As Karen Barad says, “we are part of intra-actions, we emerge and co-constitute in processes of neverending becoming in relation to a world.” As Erin Manning says, “we world,” water metabodies of which we are part of, world, generate world, relationality.

We must undo the perceptual conditions of commodification and understand water as uncommodifiable, unappropriable movement of the world.

Water is amorphogenetic, its movement exceeds and defies form, reduction to form, function, property. Water demands a new ontology of the amorphous.

We must again learn the movement of water, its generosity, its caress, its transformative force, its living dance.

...BECOMING WATER...

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Jaime del Val / JaiVal** (Madrid 1974) is a meta-media artist, philosopher, performer, producer, environmental activist and postqueer, director of Reverso Institute and of Metabody Project. He has developed transdisciplinary projects in the convergence of technological arts, critical theory and activism, that have been presented all over Europe, and North and South America, which propose redefinitions of embodiment, perception and affects that challenge normative constructions of subjectivity, sexuality and control technologies of the Information Society.

## LINKS

<http://www.reverso.org>

<http://www.metabody.eu>

Screen recording of the Tap presentation:  
[http://water-wheel.net/media\\_items/view/4865](http://water-wheel.net/media_items/view/4865)