Perception of Reality and Hydration in Divers

One notable accomplishment of Steve Jobs (editor's note: the late founder of *Apple Computers*) was the creation of Reality Distortion Fields (RDF). It appears that entering in one of these fields allows one to design a new concept of computer in three days, and makes life lose all its worth without an iPhone. Though I've discovered that the ability to distort reality can be done by looking creatively at technology. This can be quite common among divers, especially when we're talking about depth and one's quantity of air. It seems that hiding the manometer in the pocket of the BC, for example, can keep the air at a constant level, or even increase it. The maximum point of reality distortion happens at around 30 bars. It's interesting to note how this number reoccurs: a case similar to this one is another point of reality distortion that happens, in fact, at 30 meters. 36 meters are often perceived as 29.8; 38 as 29.9. On the contrary, 30 bar are perceived as almost 50.

Yet its one's opinion of his physiological limits that allows him to touch the highest peaks: the important thing is to choose a variable that fits well and to adjust it according to one's needs, using it as a means to distort reality – to flatten and smooth out the zigzag, saw-toothed pattern of a dive profile. Everyone knows perfectly well what a "sawtooth" dive profile looks like… it looks like something that "all the other guys" do. Among these variables, the most "variable" of all is the **perception of the concept of hydration.** Each one of us is different in his/her physiology and that's why it's better to stay well within the limits of the dive table and dive computer. There's some people who can be sufficiently hydrated by a coffee or a glass of Coca-Cola, and others who, already from the night before, have imagined the sound of beer and chips.

When it's 45° in the shade, I remind everyone that they need to ingest liquids and stay hydrated by drinking a lot of water. Inevitably, there are those who pounce on bottles of orange soda and Coca-Cola. "Why?" they ask. "There's water in all drinks, isn't there?" I begin to explain, "There's an alkaloid in coffee. There's sugar in soda… to **metabolize** these substances the organism needs to use the water it has and… " As usual, a trip to the other dimension begins when I reach the third syllable, "Me-ta-bol…" and the diver is no longer with us; he has cancelled out reality as you know it, and has fallen back into a parallel universe; the one that he has distorted.

This single phrase is enough to get divers and dive masters to travel back and forth along this invisible line, "Aerodynamic studies have shown that the giant hornet cannot is not able to fly due to the relationship of its wingspan to its corporeal mass." It's a quote from Igor Ivanovič Sikorskij, a pioneer in aviation, but I've heard it uttered by a diver who was attempting to continue his dive with 30 bars. Dealing with someone like that is like having a devil on board.

A diver who was a civil engineer tried to convince me that if you hold your breath for a certain period of time, you don't absorb nitrogen. He said this, obviously, to justify the fact that he had breached the fateful limit of 30 meters with only a watch and depth gauge on him. "If that's not true, then all free divers would suffer from DCS!" Words such as these, uttered under tropical skies, were enough to catalyse all the attention and brainwaves of those on board. To have held his breath and ignored the dive table and instruments was trivial: he was the genius, the smart one, the innovator… and us, the guides… we were the self-righteous defenders of old-fashioned moral convictions. My motto, "You can't trust in something that you can't measure!" had the ring of an outdated expression. Everyone listened, fascinated – to him; not to me. Under a picturesque cotton puff sky, my objections sounded dumb. He obviously was in perfect

form, and I couldn't just send him back down underwater with the excuse of an emergency recompression; it wasn't part of our standards, in fact... it is a procedure absolutely prohibited.

Fortunately, the devil doesn't come on board so often. Yet the reality distortion field isn't always efficient; dehydration continues to send divers in the hyperbaric chamber, and ship boats back to shore for false alarms. All the same, they continue to make “yo-yo” dives and other “creative” interpretations of dive instruments. I've met very few “Steve Jobs”s underwater, and not even Steve could make magic happen every time.