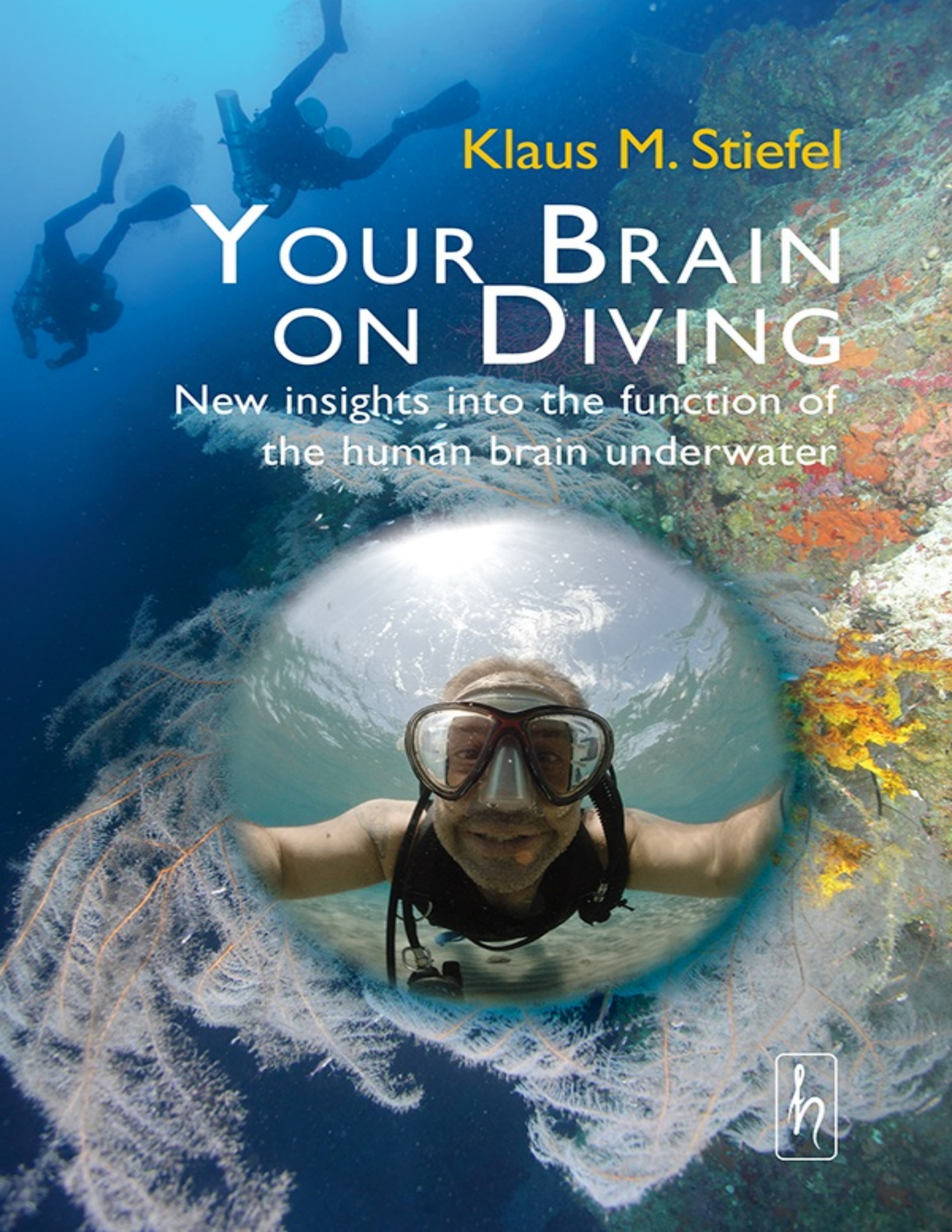


The background of the cover is an underwater photograph. In the upper left, two divers are silhouetted against the blue water. The right side of the image shows a vibrant coral reef with various colors like orange, yellow, and green. In the center, a circular frame shows a close-up of a diver's face wearing a mask and smiling.

Klaus M. Stiefel

YOUR BRAIN ON DIVING

New insights into the function of
the human brain underwater



Imprint

Author: Klaus M. Stiefel

Title: Your Brain on Diving

Subtitle: New insights into the function of the human brain underwater

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Diving and Brains: A Brief Intro

I love to be underwater, to the point that I took up diving as a teenager and now spend time underwater almost every week, sometimes teaching scuba courses, and often filming and photographing the subaquatic world. I also have a burning desire to understand what goes on in our brains, so much that I took up neurobiology as the subject of my graduate studies in 1998 at the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research. The passions for diving and for neurobiology seemed disjoint at first, even to myself, but in recent years I have seen a number of fascinating overlaps.

We humans are, of course, land mammals, and sticking our head underwater and exposing ourselves to increasing water pressure will have effects on our bodies, some of which we were equipped to deal with by Mother Evolution; others catch our bodies off guard. As so often, the most intense and curious effects show up in our bodies' most complex organ, the brain. Anybody who has scuba dived to more than about 30 meters will attest to the mind-spinning effects of inert gas narcosis.