

Five Questions for... Paul J. Crutzen

In what places or situations do you get your best ideas?

In all kinds of places and situations, but mostly when I'm relaxing. My brain is always working on something. After I've discovered something, I often ask myself why other people haven't thought of it before.

In which everyday skill would you call yourself an "expert"?

In atmospheric chemistry and climate research. However, my special area is very interdisciplinary, so I come into contact with physicists, chemists, biologists, oceanographers, and space researchers.

Which everyday mystery do you think most urgently requires a scientific explanation or a technical solution?

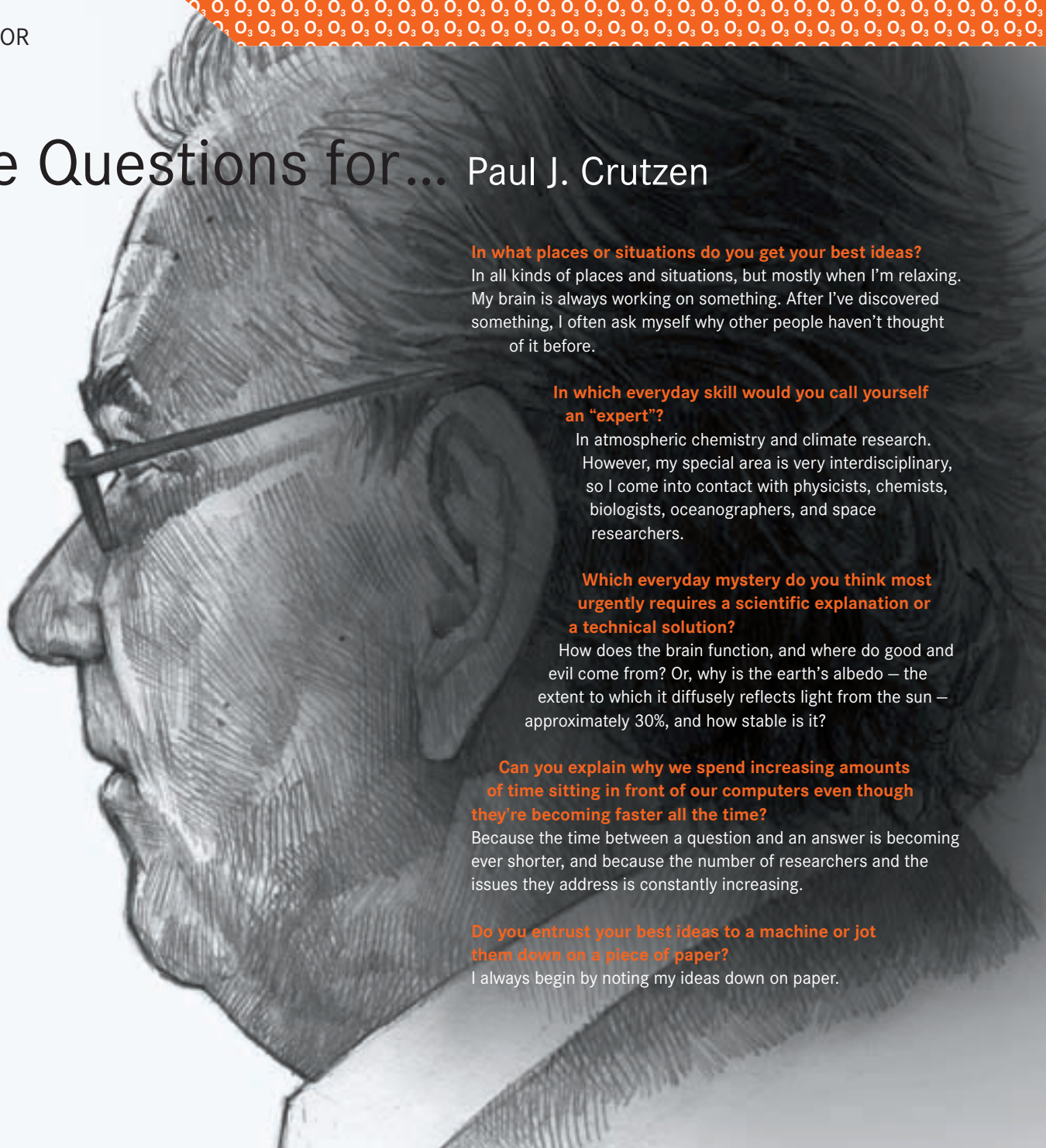
How does the brain function, and where do good and evil come from? Or, why is the earth's albedo — the extent to which it diffusely reflects light from the sun — approximately 30%, and how stable is it?


Can you explain why we spend increasing amounts of time sitting in front of our computers even though they're becoming faster all the time?

Because the time between a question and an answer is becoming ever shorter, and because the number of researchers and the issues they address is constantly increasing.

Do you entrust your best ideas to a machine or jot them down on a piece of paper?

I always begin by noting my ideas down on paper.

 PAUL J. CRUTZEN

 WEB TIP

In 1995 the media praised the Dutch atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen as the "Savior of the Climate" after he won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry together with U.S. scientists Sherwood Rowland and Mario Molina. The three researchers had identified chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as

the cause of the ozone hole. This discovery resulted in a global ban on CFCs. After working as a researcher in Sweden and the USA, Crutzen, who was born in 1933, held the position of Director of the Atmospheric Chemistry Division at the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry in Mainz.

You can find an interview with Paul J. Crutzen at HTR online. In it, the professor emeritus talks about climate protection issues, the tasks of scientists, and the curiosity that drives scientific research.

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