



DR. ELESZ ZEHNDORFER

AWARD-WINNING WRITER AND AUTHOR, BRITISH MENSA RESEARCH OFFICER, LECTURER, AND TEE RESEARCH FELLOW

Dr Elesz Zehndorfer is an award-winning writer whose work spans leadership, politics, finance, and the physiology of human performance. She is the author of eight books, including *Leadership: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge, 2013), *Charismatic Leadership* (Routledge, 2015), *The Physiology of Emotional & Irrational Investing* (Routledge, 2016), *Evolution, Politics & Charisma: Why Do Populists Win?* (Routledge, 2019), *Leadership: Performance Beyond Expectations* (Routledge, 2022), political thriller *Upload* (Blackheath Publishing, 2023), *Post-Truth Politics: A Brave New World?* (Routledge, 2025), and the forthcoming *Beat Burnout, Optimise Wellness* (Legend Press, 2026). Her current research interests focus on political misinformation and, in her role as Research Officer for British Mensa, high-IQ-related concepts. Elesz has lectured across the sport and business faculties of leading universities for many years and is currently engaged as an eMBA lecturer and research fellow for TEE (Transylvania Executive Education). A Senior Adviser to the Paddy Ashdown Research Forum, Dr. Zehndorfer has also presented her research across Europe, the UK, the Philippines, Canada, and the United States. As a consultant, she serves as Managing Partner of boutique consulting firm Lakeside Partners GmbH. She also manages the Psychology Today blog 'Political Animals & Animal Spirits' and is a regular columnist (writing the bimonthly 'Data Dispatch' column) for British Mensa's IQ Magazine.

Passengers

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Cosmologist Carl Sagan famously said that “we are made of star-stuff.” It's true: if you gaze up at the cosmos this evening, deep into the black of night, you will see the origin of most of the elements in your body. The calcium in your bones, the iron in your blood and the oxygen you just inhaled were all forged inside a star, billions of years ago.¹

At the atomic level, the story gets even more incredible. Every part of our planet, from trees, to oceans, to eagles, to humans, is composed of the same building blocks—the same carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen. Everything you see, feel, and hear is ultimately made of the same material that we are, creating a deep interconnectedness of man to a deeply elegant system that surrounds us.

The most compelling and beautiful part of this picture to me, however, is how we provide temporary shelter to passengers amongst us. While holy texts counsel the idea of caring for strangers, and providing shelter for them, it is something our bodies have done since the dawn of man.

You may not know that the atoms that make up our bodies are simply passengers, destined to leave us after a very short period of time. You exhale, and a carbon atom drifts into the air, inhaled by an eagle, perhaps, who transports it across a lake. It might then find its way into a bird who migrates across an ocean. Over billions of years, that same carbon atom that recently found temporary lodging in your body may have already resided in many of the people, the animals, and deep in the soil of the lands of the Middle East, East Asia, Europe or Australasia. The sheer mystery and elegance of such a journey is astounding.

How wonderful that we are able to provide temporary shelter to these little adventurers, subsequently becoming part of their billion-year-old journeys.

This deep interconnectedness ultimately gives us a shared purpose, a deep connection to the earth, to each other, and to every living thing that surrounds us. Clearly, we are part of something that is truly so much greater than ourselves. It is a sobering idea that these same atoms finding temporary homes within our bodies might once have resided in the bodies of our friends, our heroes, and our enemies. We are more connected than we think.

Ultimately, when people look for miracles, I feel that I do not need to. I simply look to nature. To me, nature is the place where the concept of the divine, and science, naturally meet.

Nature tells a story that is irrefutably beautiful and clear: there is a creator of some kind, and we exist within its mind-blowingly elegant creation. I refer to this creator as a higher power: you might refer to the same creator as God. Either way, you and I, reader and writer, are already connected. And that, in my view, is a miracle in itself.

Footnote:

- 1) To be perfectly clear, the human body is about 60-65% water. While water is overwhelmingly comprised of hydrogen by atom count (two hydrogen to one oxygen), hydrogen only makes up about 11.1% of the molecule by mass. Furthermore, this hydrogen (as opposed to oxygen) was created during the Big Bang, not inside a star.