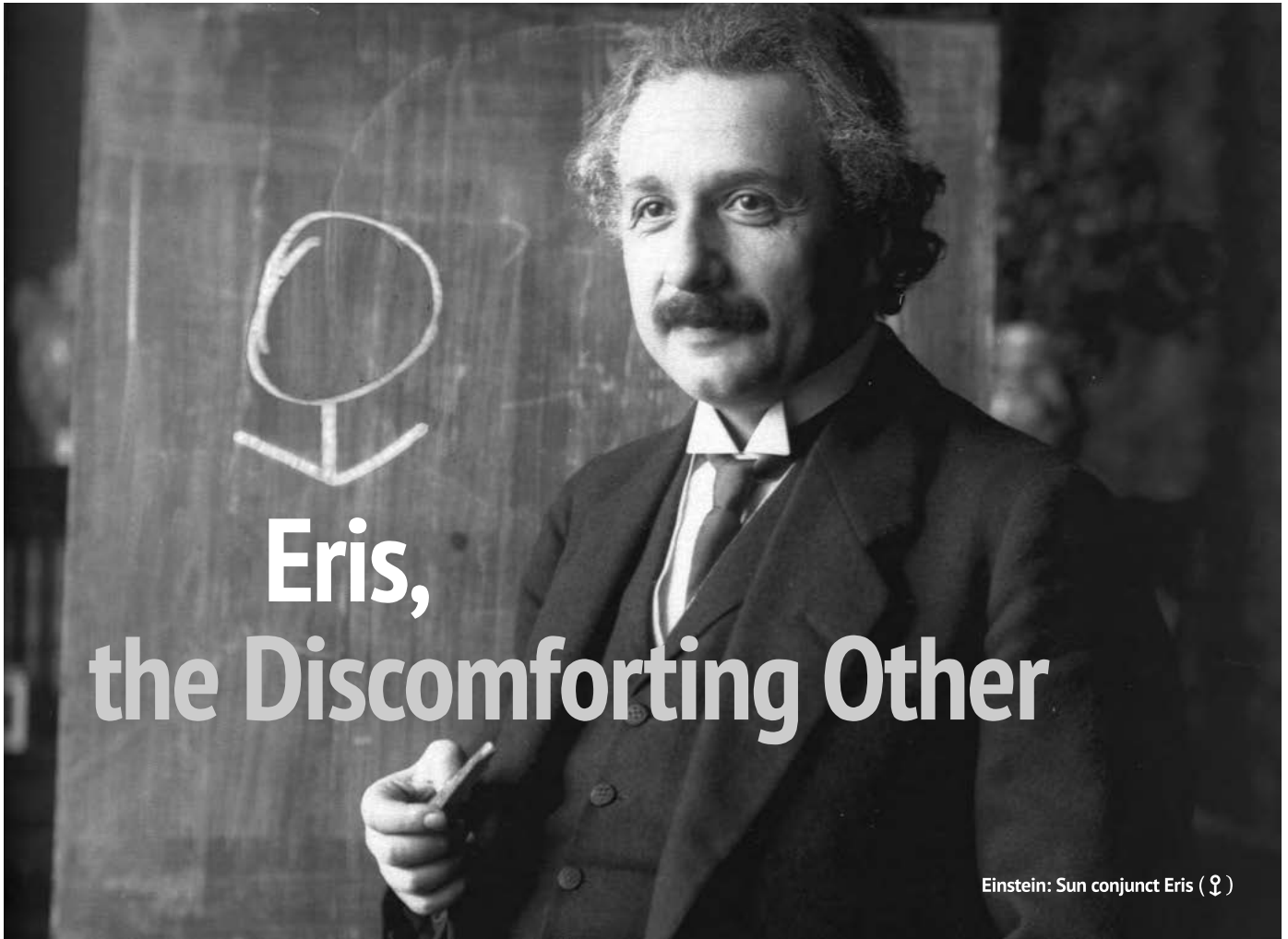


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Eris, the Discomforting Other

Einstein: Sun conjunct Eris (♀)

Back in 2006, I was more than a bit miffed when Caltech professor and self-declared Pluto-killer Mike Brown named his larger-than-Pluto celestial object after an evil goddess. Who does that? You find a really big, planet-sized object that has a decent shot at being a major player in our solar system, and you name it after Eris, sister of Ares, the nasty, bitter goddess who instigated the Trojan War

Of course it's obvious why he did so. In his experience, she was perfect. Eris fit the bill of being a Greek goddess, to continue the Greco-Roman-god nomenclature of our planets (so his discovery could 'fit in' with the other Major Players of the Solar System Club), and planet Eris did cause a big stink, just like the goddess of myth. Once Eris was spotted, it would cause no end of trouble



Sue Kientz shares her research into this intriguing dwarf planet

for Pluto's status as a bona-fide planet. But what are we astrologers to do with an object that starts out with such an evil association? How are we to find out the positive and negative aspects of this Thing

The best mechanism for discovering planetary meaning, I believe, is to look at lots of charts

Dr. Brown has plopped in our laps?

Most of the astrological community has dealt with this problem by ignoring Eris – and anyone who has read the myth knows, that is a very bad idea. It was because Eris was ignored and not invited to the wedding party of Peleus and Thetis that she kicked up such a fuss!

Those astrologers who have attempted to pierce the Eris mystery have mainly let the ancient myth lead them. When Marina E. Partridge attempted to find two sides of Eris using the myth, she found two, but each was equally dark. She cites Eris as a mother who produces a brood of monstrous creatures who mete out vengeance and a sister so insulted that she brought discord to gods and men alike with what was at that time equivalent to world war.¹ While claiming that these are two sides, Partridge admits

that both are about “tough love and ... rough justice”. Partridge can see only a Lilith-like dark goddess, with hardly any positive features.

This same method of interpretation has been typical of many other astrologers as well, notably Doug Walker,² Alison Chester-Lambert,³ Henry Seltzer,⁴ Lynn Hayes,⁵ and Lynn Koiner,⁶ to name only a few. Some also analyze Eris’s 2005 discovery chart, and many look for clues to Eris’s meaning in the dramatic decision of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in August 2006, which refused Eris full planetary status while it demoted Pluto and (most surprising of all) elevated 950km-wide Ceres, the largest asteroid in the asteroid belt.

The best mechanism for discovering planetary meaning, I believe, is to look at lots of charts, specifically of well-known individuals and enterprises (as in the U.S. chart or a company’s chart), or clients with whom you are intimately familiar, and see what the object does for that person or entity. The myth can be misleading. I will grant, however, that the IAU’s odd decision resonated with me on one point: in one fell stroke, this prestigious scientific body essentially confirmed and completed the zodiac’s rulerships.

As every astrologer who has studied the history of the art knows, before Uranus was discovered, sign rulership was parcelled out in such a way that while the Sun and Moon ruled Leo and Cancer respectively, the other planets ruled two signs apiece. Then when Uranus came along, it lightened Saturn’s load by taking over as ruler of Aquarius, and Neptune’s arrival enabled Jupiter to get rid of Pisces and concentrate fully on Sagittarius. After 1930, Pluto was assigned Scorpio, leaving Mars only one job as ruler of Aries. But this left Venus ruling both Taurus and Libra, and Mercury ruling Gemini and Virgo. This begged the question – when were we going to discover the last two planets?

In 1986, Demetra George in *Asteroid Goddesses* convincingly argued that the largest asteroid Ceres was the ruler of Virgo.⁷ Since Ceres is named after the Roman goddess of grain and agriculture,



Prado Museum

Golden Apple of Discord, Jacob Jordaens: Eris throws the Apple of Discord ‘for the most beautiful’

the claim seemed quite reasonable.

So fast forward to 2006, where we hear that Pluto is demoted (cast ‘downward’ into a scientific ‘underworld?’), Ceres is elevated, and Eris is declared “not a planet.” Rather, all three get a new designation, Dwarf Planet. So all three are the ‘same’, in a sense.

Since no one is moving Pluto out of Scorpio, and Ceres already has a 28-year track record of claim to rule Virgo, what

I propose that Eris’s rulership of Libra can lead us to consider a more useful and truly evocative meaning for Eris: the Other

do we have left but to consider that Eris could rule Libra? This idea is not new,⁸ and not a popular one if you read blog postings on the Internet, as the myth analysts have so many thinking of Eris as all-evil, all the time. But I propose that Eris’s rulership (or co-rulership, if that’s more palatable) of Libra can lead us to consider a more useful and truly evocative meaning for Eris: the Other.

You can keep Venus ♀ as a ruler of Libra, as Venus has well represented “The Other” from time immemorial in her role as The Loved One, The Spouse, The Rival, The Business Partner, or many other partner or adversarial roles. But there is another version of Otherness that is not Venus-like, that Eris aptly fills: The Stranger. The

Unknown. The Alien. Eris indicates a person who is so different, we resist considering him as being ‘one of us’. This can be a negative reaction, as in someone who is suspected to be a criminal, or illegal alien, or terrorist, or mentally ill. A racist considers a black or brown person an Other, and most educated individuals probably consider a racist an Other.

Eris behaving badly

Our first test of this Eris theory could be to ask, does Eris show up prominently in the charts of people who have been known to dehumanize others? Specifically, can we find Eris involved in aspects to key personal planets of people who, just because a group of people was ‘different’ from themselves, showed some lack of humanity to that group? I think the top Nazi Germany leadership might be a good place to start.⁹

Adolf Hitler (20 April 1889, 6:30 pm, Braunau am Inn, Austria), ☉ (0 8 47) < ♀ (19 302).

Heinrich Himmler (7 October 1900, 3:30 pm, Munich, Germany), ♂ (6 18) ♀ (22 15).

Joseph Goebbels (29 October 1897, 11:30 pm, Rheydt, Germany), ☉ (6 47) ♀ (21 00).

Rudolf Hess (26 April 1894, 10 am, Alexandria, Egypt), ☉ (6 03) < ♀ (20 51).

Hermann Göring (12 January 1893, 4 am, Rosenheim, Germany), ☉ (22 11) * ♀ (19 14).

The results are pretty negative, which is good for our theory (one of the few good things we can say about Nazis, other than they make perfect villains). All the top brass had challenging ☉/♀ or ♂/♀ angular relationships, as shown, except for Göring, who had ☉*♀. Considering that he benefited from his dealings with the ‘Other’, the rich German Jews whose art and treasure he made sure to confiscate personally, maybe the sextile is an ironic twist – good for *him*.

Next let’s look at a few event charts for when groups of people were treated with

utter disregard for their humanity. In all of them, the underlying connection is that people were not mistreated or killed for terribly personal reasons. They were considered part of a group of human beings that simply had to be disposed of, for some sick reason. If you would take all the people killed in each of the following situations, and substitute completely different people from the same target group, the result would be the same – the victims involved were killed for their membership of a group, not for themselves as individuals. In all of these rather infamous events, ☉/♃ is present in challenging aspect:

Kristallnacht (9 November 1938, Berlin, Germany; 10 pm used),¹⁰ ☉ (16♌50) ♀ (3♄33); ♂(9♌51)♂ ♀ (3♄33). The German Nazis' two-day pogrom directed against Jews killed 91 and sent 300,000 to concentration camps, where hundreds died. Around 7,500 Jewish businesses and 267 synagogues were destroyed and looted, and Jewish cemeteries desecrated.

Jonestown Massacre (18 November, 1978, 5:10 pm, Jonestown, Guyana),¹¹ ☉ (26♌08) ♀ (13♄47), was a mass forced suicide that killed 918 people.

Rwanda Genocide Begins (6 April 1994, 8:20 pm, Kigali, Rwanda)¹² ☉ (16♄42)♂ ♀ (17♄49). Thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutus were violently murdered in just a few days, and possibly 800,000 deaths occurred by July, when the killing finally stopped.

Norway Massacre (22 July 2011, beginning 3:25 pm, Oslo, Norway),¹³ ☉ (29♌24)♂ ♀ (22♄29). Seventy-seven people died, killed by a deranged Christian fundamentalist wishing to start a race war in Norway.

Boston Marathon Bombing (15 April 2013, 2:49 pm, Boston, MA),¹⁴ ☉ (25♄57)♂♂(26♄27)♂ ♀ (22♄18). Three died and 264 were injured from bombs set off at the finish line.

Is Eris an indicator of criminals in general? Evidence points to only certain types of criminals. ☉/♃ and/or ♂/♃ contacts are often found in the birth charts of those who kill people not because

they dislike or are angry at them personally, but because they are making some statement or are venting against people in general. A negative Eris can indicate someone who is anti-social, uses people, and/or has difficulty relating or caring about the feelings of others. But there's usually more than just a negative Eris in charts of people who injure or kill others.

Anders Behring Breivik (13 February 1979, 12:50 pm, Oslo, Norway)¹⁵, perpetrator of the Norway Massacre above, had ☉ (24♌10) ♀ (27♌30)♂ ♀ (13♄47). Acting alone, he killed 77 people and injured 319.

Jim Jones (13 May 1931, 10 pm, Lynn, IN),¹⁶ responsible for the Jonestown Massacre mentioned above. Among other problems, he had ♂(16♌16)♂ ♀ (2♄26), but he had no problem ordering hundreds of people to kill themselves.

Charles Manson (12 November 1934, 4:40 pm, Cincinnati, OH),¹⁷ ☉ (19♌49)♂ ♀ (2♄24). At the time of his first murder on 1 July 1969,¹⁸ Manson's ♀(3♌01)♂ ♀ (2♄24).

Andrea Yates (2 July 1964, Houston, TX¹⁹; 7 am used), ☉ (10♌38)♂ ♀ (11♄19). This young mother killed all five of her children, drowning them in a bathtub. The children were targeted as a group, not as individuals.

Douglas Alan Feldman (19 June 1958²⁰; 7 am and Dallas, TX, used). Born with ♂(8♄41)♂ ♀ (9♄47), Feldman shot two truckers, one who cut him off on the highway, and the other because "I was still mad", as transiting ☉ (2♄41)♂ ♀ (19♄19).

Peter Sutcliffe (2 June 1946, 8:30 pm, Bingley, England),²¹ the Yorkshire Ripper, had ♂(20♌17)♂ ♀ (6♄37). He killed 13 women and attempted to kill another seven.

Phil Spector (26 December 1939, 2:55 pm, Bronx, NY),²² ☉ (4♄17)♂ ♀ (3♄39). This famous record producer had a habit of drawing guns on people, in total disregard for their safety.

Unabomber Ted Kaczynski (22 May 1942, 10:45 am, Chicago, IL),²³ waged an anti-technology war using package bombs. When he mailed his first bomb on 26 May 1978, his ♀ (5♌12)♂ ♀ (5♄39), and transiting ♀ (12♄39)♂ ♀ (0♌45).

Ariel Castro (10 July 1960²⁴; 7 am and

Columbia, Puerto Rico, used), ☉ (18♌10)♂ ♀ (10♄19). Castro kidnapped, raped, and imprisoned three women for a decade, and while his behaviour ignored their humanity, he did not kill them – perhaps small comfort for his victims.

Christopher Dorner (4 June 1979, New York, NY²⁵; 7 am used), ☉ (13♌14)♂ ♀ (14♄51). Former Los Angeles police officer Dorner's ♀ (15♌23)♂ ♀ (14♄59) on 3 February 2013, when he began shooting family members of former LAPD co-workers in revenge for being fired. He died in a shoot-out nine days later, with transiting ☉ (24♌29)♂ ♀ (21♄43) mirroring his natal.

Dylan Andrew Quick (26 May 1992²⁶; 7 am, Houston, TX, used), with ☉ (5♌28)♂ ♀ (17♄52), stabbed 14 people on a California college campus on 9 April 2013, as ☉ (19♄58), ♂(21♄50), and ♀ (22♄14) were conjunct – six days before the Boston Marathon Bombing.

Eris at its best

If Eris is comparable in dignity and importance with its twin-in-size, Pluto, we can't find only negative uses and instances; there must be more. There must be good Eris contacts, and indeed there are. Eris at its best shows a concern for equality and the desire to improve the community.

Emancipation Proclamation (effective 1 January 1863²⁷; 12:01 am used, Washington, DC), ☉ (10♄23)♂ ♀ (7♌14).

Civil Rights Act of 1964 (2 July 1964, Washington, DC²⁸; 3 pm used), ☉ (10♌53)♂ ♀ (11♄19). After this bill was passed, implementation would be far from smooth, so the square aspect is very apt; more struggle in the fight for equality for African Americans was still ahead. Notice that the Sun of this bill opposes the Sun of the Emancipation Proclamation, and Eris is squaring both, illustrating that this is a milestone for this great effort.

U.S. Bill of Rights (ratified 15 December 1791, New York, NY²⁹; 12 pm used), ♂(22♄31)♂ ♀ (21♄57). Passage of the Bill of Rights was a great moment in not just American but also human history.

Magna Carta (15 June 1215, Runnymede, England³⁰; 12 pm used), ☉ (0♁07) ♀ (0♁37) ♂ ♀ (27♁50). King John of England was forced into this agreement with his barons so as to limit his powers by law and protect their rights.

Columbus' Discovery of America (12 October 1492, 2 am, Samana Cay, Bahamas),³¹ ☉ (28♁19) ♂ ♀ (23♁16). When Columbus' men caught sight of the shores of today's Bahamas, they saw Others whom no European had ever seen; they thought they were Indians, but that too was exotic. The Native Americans also had an Eris experience, as the Spanish sailors were, to them, very strange and interesting Others.

People who need people often have Eris

People with supportive or easy aspects between Sun and Eris typically like people, or are generally liked by other people.

Charles Dickens (7 February 1812, 11:55 pm, Portsmouth, England),³² ☉ (18♁08) ♂ ♀ (8♁51). An author with a lifelong concern for the poor and ignored ones (of which he was one as a child), Dickens effectively brought attention to their plight by writing about them in his popular serial novels.

Pope John Paul II (18 May 1920, 5:30 pm, Wadowice, Poland),³³ ☉ (27♁21) ✕ ♀ (29♁19). This pope was beloved and revered during his papacy, and is expected to be canonized in 2014.

Jackie Robinson (31 January 1919, 6:30 pm, Cairo, GA),³⁴ ☉ (11♁06) Moon (11♁50) ♀ (26♁50), but ♃ (27♁40) ✕ ♀.

The man who broke baseball's colour barrier in 1947, Robinson endured death threats and racial slurs, but Jackie's lightning-fast base-running (Mercury!) and exceptional ball-playing won over the haters who apparently loved their team winning more than they hated black people.

Barack Obama (4 August 1961, 7:24 pm, Honolulu, HI),³⁵ ☉ (12♁32) ♀ (10♁29). To become the first African-American U.S. president, especially coming to the presidential field a virtual unknown, you must be extremely likeable. Obama's ☉♂ ♀ trumped his ☉♂ ♀, the latter indicative not only of his absent father, but also of the 'born in Kenya' and 'must be a Muslim'

dogged rumours he's had to overcome.

Nelson Mandela (18 July 1918, 3 pm, Mveso, South Africa),³⁶ ☉ (25♁04) ♀ (28♁49). Former U.S. President Bill Clinton recently said that Mandela taught him that "if you're in public life and you have public responsibilities, you cannot be free and effective unless you have no personal feelings of anger".³⁷ In other words, you cannot take the anger of others personally, and you yourself have to forgo anger towards those others, to have any positive impact.

All that said, Eris doesn't have to be in 'good' aspect for you to manifest it positively. Perhaps it is a blessing to have Eris conjunct, sextile, or trine your personal planets, which makes it easier for you to be disinterested with others and therefore less emotional and more practical. But the following examples suggest you can be challenged by Eris, e.g. ☉♂ ♀, and then take up that challenge. You can literally make Other People your business, your job.

Pope Francis I (17 December 1936, 9 pm, Buenos Aires, Argentina),³⁸ ☉ (25♁54) ☉ ♀ (2♁49); elected pope as transiting ♀ (21♁57) ♀ his ☉. The new pope seems genuinely interested in all people, and appears to suggest that the Catholic Church may become more conciliatory.

Malala Yousafzai (12 July 1997, Mingora, Pakistan³⁹; 7 am used), ☉ (19♁46) ☉ ♀ (19♁13). Shot in the head by the Taliban for championing the education of girls in Afghanistan, Malala survived and has renewed her struggle to promote better access to education for young girls worldwide.

Henry VIII (7 July 1491, 8:45 am, Greenwich, England),⁴⁰ ☉ (23♁09) ☉ ♀ (23♁38). Call it your business or just a sad trial when you keep getting married to Others, because you need a male heir.

How about those who portray or create Eris energy for artistic purposes? Here are a few notable examples:

Agatha Christie (15 September 1890, 4 am, Torquay, England),⁴¹ ☉ (22♁14) ♂ ♀ (18♁59). Master of the whodunit, creating characters who blithely 'bump off' people, all for her readers' entertainment. Not only

did she create a huge number of murderously inhumane dramatic situations, Christie had a very memorable marriage (♀) breakup in which she disappeared for about ten days after learning of her husband's mistress. To the end of her days, she refused to discuss what happened during that period, which has been her ultimate mystery.

Steven Spielberg (18 December 1946, 6:16 pm, Cincinnati, OH),⁴² ☉ (26♁21) ☉ ♀ (5♁32). This American film director regularly examines the relationship of people to Others, as can be seen at his p. ☉/♀ milestones. In 1982, with p. ☉ (2♁35) ✕ p. ♀ (5♁37), he directed *E.T.*, a playful film about an unlikely friendship between a boy and a stranded extraterrestrial, and in 1985, with p. ☉ (6♁10) still ✕ p. ♀ (5♁38), he produced and directed *The Color Purple*, a serious study of discrimination and suffering in the south. Later, when p. ☉ (18♁57) ♀ p. ♀ (5♁44), Spielberg produced and directed *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), about the efforts to bring home a soldier whose three brothers had all been killed in action. None who risked their lives to find him knew the man they searched for. Somehow it didn't matter who he was personally – he earns their sacrifice, because of his family's great sacrifice for others.

John Williams (8 February 1932, Flushing, NY;⁴³ 7 am used), ☉ (18♁31) ♀ (1♁40). At p. ☉ (2♁01) ♂ p. ♀ (2♁09), Williams composed the soundtrack to the movie *Jaws* (released 20 June 1975). His primal, repeating two-note theme for the Shark has become an indelible musical trope for the ultimate unreasonable and unreasoning, deadly Other.

Jean-Paul Sartre (21 June 1905, 6:45 pm, Paris, France),⁴⁴ ☉ (29♁40) ☉ ♀ (24♁49). French existentialist who wrote the play *No Exit*, with its famous line, "Hell is Other People". Sartre wrote extensively on the idea that people are constantly faced with the unsettling realization that whenever you meet someone, you are an object in that other person's life.

Eris the Exceptional

There's one more kind of Otherness – the

Whitman epically celebrated the Other in his poetry collection Leaves of Grass

intoxicating and also sometimes problematic alienation of being an exceptional Other.

Walt Whitman (31 May 1819, 1:45 am, Huntington, NY),⁴⁵ ☉ (8 II 55) △ ♀ (14 44 50). Whitman epically celebrated the Other in his poetry collection *Leaves of Grass*, as in “I Hear America Singing”; he calls all Others out by their profession or role in life in long lists, neglecting or rejecting seemingly no one. In December 1862, transiting ♀ (7 42) □ his ☉, as he travelled to find his injured brother. In the process he was appalled by the sight of horrendous Civil War casualties.⁴⁶

Ludwig van Beethoven (16 December 1770, 1:20 pm, Bonn, Germany),⁴⁷ ☉ (24 42) ♀ ♀ (21 36). Even though Beethoven was recognized as a musical genius and celebrated composer, this did not help him marry the woman he loved. Beethoven was not born an aristocrat, so he was never considered a suitable match for any of the women in whose exalted circles he moved due to his music. He lived forever as an Other.

Albert Einstein (14 March 1879, 11:30 am, Ulm, Germany),⁴⁸ ☉ (23 30) ♀ ♀ (14 50). When transiting Eris reached Einstein’s natal Sun, the 26-year-old patent clerk stunned the world by claiming that time and space were the same thing, and it could bend and warp. His ideas seemed incredible, the product of someone not like the rest of us. At his death, his brain was reserved for study to try to understand the source of his genius, but Einstein had insisted that the rest of his body’s ashes be scattered, so his grave would not become a place of undue reverence. He was uncomfortable being treated as an Extraordinary Other.

William Shakespeare (23 April 1564, Stratford-upon-Avon, England⁴⁹; 9:22 pm rect.), ☉ (13 8 14) ♀ ♀ (13 8 06).

Shakespeare must have had a powerful interest in Others. His plays have been held as proof that he intimately understood human nature. Shakespeare’s life also demonstrates that when a genius is found to be so exceptional and his corpus of work so phenomenal, some may even claim that the person couldn’t have achieved those honours. It had to be someone else instead.

These individuals are among the greatest minds of modern times. Certainly they are revered and their works hallowed. In his “Ceres and Eris” article, David D. Jones called out the last three individuals among others as proof that Eris must be indicative of great mental powers.⁵⁰ While I agree with Jones’ strategy of putting Eris in charts to tease out its meaning, I would argue that what makes these three and the others he references mentally exceptional and inventive, is not Eris, but another dwarf planet we must take into account, Makemake. In my article in the next issue of the Journal, on the third-largest Kuiper belt object,⁵¹ I will demonstrate its value as indicating an intellectual grasp that is completely different and transformative – and often disturbing to the status quo. This highlights the trouble we have on our hands with the embarrassment of riches of all these large objects. We can’t just look at them one at a time to understand their meaning.

To expand on this last point, if Eris is indicative of great intellect, what are we then to do with the U.S. Declaration of Independence chart (4 July 1776, 2:17 am, Philadelphia, PA),⁵² with its ☉ (12 43) ♀ ♀ (8 09)? The men who founded the USA were not polarized against intellectuals, as the opposition would suggest, but they sure had their hands full dealing with two key groups of Others: native Americans and black slaves. When the U.S. p. ☉ (4 29) □ p. ♀ (7 11) in 1861, the U.S. north and south began fighting the Civil War over slavery, and in 1955 at p. ☉ (9 42) ♀ p. ♀ (8 44), Rosa Parks refused to give her bus seat to a white man, kicking off the civil rights era.

Recall that earlier I mentioned the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with transiting Eris at

11 19, which was in orb to square the U.S. Sun. This is the time the U.S. was embroiled in protests over the rights and treatment of not just native and African Americans, but also the Vietnamese. Eris exactly squared the U.S. Sun several times, as Nixon and his staff were caught spying on the Other party, and the U.S. began an ignominious exit from the Vietnam War. As you can see, the U.S. chart and its progressions and transits are more powerful evidence that Eris is Other.



Eris, goddess of chaos, strife and discord,
ca 550 BCE

© I.Gesk (Altes Museum, Berlin)

Look out for Sue's article on dwarf planet
Makemake in the next issue!

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This article is excerpted from **Sue Kientz's** upcoming book, *More Plutos*. Sue began studying the astrological signs in 1977 as a way to learn more about symbolism in literature. Originally sceptical that astrology could have any value, after learning how to calculate charts, she was intrigued by the results. Sue has always included the large asteroids in her chart work, and sees the Dwarf Planets as the finishing touches astrology needs to show that Time has actual (and often very beautiful) patterns and features. A technical writer, she lives with her boyfriend and four dogs in Pasadena, CA. Website: www.moreplutos.com

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Culture and Cosmos

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