

# Pluto: proper planet or undeserving dwarf?

A frozen hunk of ice does not a planet make, Ostad. Let's rid our solar system of such shameful planetary impurity



ANDREW NEWBORN

point

I'm brilliant, it's impossible to deny. It's easily proven too. For years I've been saying that Pluto shouldn't be considered a planet, and it seems astronomers have finally caught up to my all-encompassing understanding of everything and set the solar system right.

Pluto's orbit is what NASA scientists refer to as "whacked the fuck out." You see, it just doesn't line up with the eight real planets of the solar system. It likes to hang out with other galactic hoodlums, like that gaggle of ice balls in the Kuiper Belt who could never afford a better orbit. Real planets have nice, clean, round orbits close to the sun like Earth and Mars. Sometimes, as with Jupiter, they blow their wealth on a giant body and hang out a little further away. But Pluto never could compete, and scientists have finally shown the little bastard the door.

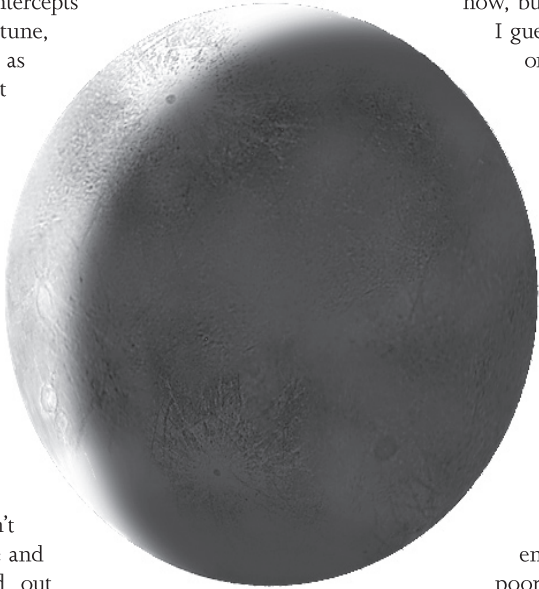
You see, Kuiper Belt objects, along with their dwarf-planet kin, just don't understand what it takes to be a planet. They don't bother clearing their orbits of other objects, and sometimes they're so small they can't even overcome rigid body forces to make themselves round!

Becoming a planet is like joining an exclusive club: there are rules for these sorts of things, and they must be strictly enforced. We need to keep the riff-raff out—otherwise any jackass of a rock could become a planet, and I'd never be able to remember all their names. If Pluto had remained a planet, that would have cleared the way for potentially dozens more planets. It's a

chilling thought for someone like me, whose overpowered brain couldn't be bothered to actually memorize his multiplication tables.

But mere mortals that they are, astronomers still lag behind the type of super-intelligence that my Arts education has granted me, and their scientific definition of a planet still fails to live up to my rigorous testing. The persons responsible for deciding this new definition didn't bother including anything about objects with eccentric orbits. Any real planet ought to have an orbit shaped like a beautiful, perfectly spherical woman. Pluto's orbit is elliptical, however, and it intercepts with the orbit of Neptune, so it could have just as easily been kicked out by my own, much sexier definition.

If the scientists of the world were all as intelligent as me, they would have figured out interstellar travel by now, and we'd know what other solar systems look like. Since they aren't that smart, and since and they haven't figured out interstellar travel, very little is known about other solar systems. It's impossible right now to know if our system is the standard, and I can dig it if the definition of a planet has to keep changing to keep up with new discoveries—I'm just going on what our solar system looks like.



You're a snob of galactic proportions, Newborn. Discriminating against dwarf planets is so 20th century



RAMIN OSTAD

counter-point

I have to say Newborn, I am shocked and appalled by the things you've just said. As an Arts student, you should have learned a little something about

equality, decency and respect by now, but I guess you haven't.

I guess the field of astronomy has been taken over by people like you—people who would like nothing more than to see planets like Pluto be excluded from the privileges that come from being a part of our solar system. In short, you, sir, are nothing more than a Planetist.

You base your "science" on how "whack" poor Pluto's orbit is based on all of the other planets.

You call it a "hoodlum" simply because it has no one else but its friends in the Kuiper Belt. You call them "dwarf" planets and "ice balls"—discriminatory adjectives to say the least—and poke fun at their disenfranchisement simply because they couldn't

afford large planetary bodies or unobstructed orbits like the other "real" planets could.

Just because a body's orbit is elliptical—or because it intersects with Neptune's, or because it's smaller—doesn't mean that you have the right to add and remove it from the list of relevance whenever you please. These bodies, even the ones that aren't perfectly curvaceous, have just as much right to be planets as all the others in our solar system. They're there, they may be square, get used to it.

The problem with people like you, Newborn, is that you're so used to sitting on your high horse of livable planetary existence that you care nothing for all those other planets trying to make something of themselves.

How dare you be so prejudiced towards Pluto just because it's a little more eccentric than all of the other so-called "real" planets? You should be ashamed of yourself. All you have proven here is that you're afraid of what might happen if we did start adding more "jackass" planets.

There would be dozens of them, Newborn. Dozens of planets that don't fit your ideal of planets shaped like fat, rich women and have perfect, non-eccentric orbits. Dozens of planets that are jagged, that have elliptical or square or trapezoid orbits.

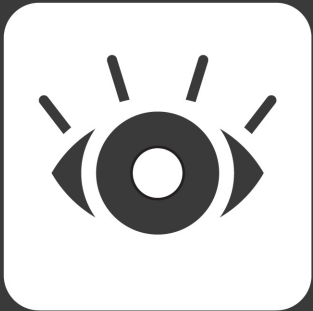
What would you do then? Would your "superior" intellect suddenly quiver in fear at the prospect of that much memorization? Would it scare you to know that maybe, just maybe, your "perfect" solar system was to be invaded by these "hoodlum" planets who really want nothing more than to belong?

One day, you and your elite Planetist friends will learn their lesson—mark my words. But until that day comes, the poor bodies of the Kuiper Belt will have to find a new system to call home—and I, for one, will gladly help them.

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