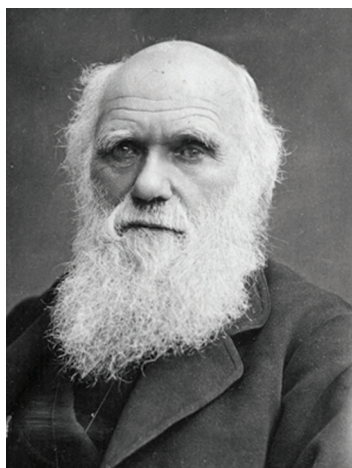


# Ceres: ruler of healing environments?

Faye Blake

**The new science of epigenetics has disproved the ‘born with bad genes’ theory and shown the vital importance of environment in switching genes on and off. Dwarf planet Ceres can be used to define an optimal environment for maintaining or restoring health**

In 2006, something happened which I find important for astrology. Ceres became a dwarf-planet, putting her on the same level as Pluto. That same year, the Human Genome Project, the largest collaborative biological project ever undertaken, published the sequence of the last chromosome, reaching a milestone in the goal to map all the genes in human DNA. The results, however, raised more questions than answers, and hopes that the project would provide the keys to understanding and predicting inherited disease were dashed.



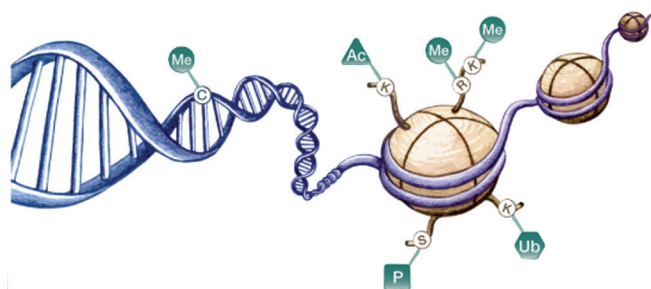
Charles Darwin

Ceres was originally discovered in 1801, the year Jean-Baptiste Lamarck first published his thoughts on his theory of evolution. In 1809 he detailed two laws on the subject in the book *Philosophie zoologique*. The first law was uncontroversial. Not so the second one, concerning acquired characteristics being passed on to offspring.

The idea of this being the case was never accepted in his lifetime. Charles Darwin's work came to have more importance and seemingly disproved this law. However after 2006, when the Genome Project was complete, the resulting explosion of research could prove that Lamarck's theory was right after all. One field of research in this area is epigenetics.

## Why Ceres?

The first inkling I had that Ceres might be a potential ‘ruler’ of epigenetics comes from her history. I think “as above so below” means, among other things, that when a planet is discovered or changes classification, something in world consciousness changes. 1801 is the start of a desire to scientifically understand how evolution and inheritance works. This includes the study of diseases that are thought to be inherited. Our understanding in this area has taken a huge leap since 2006.



Epigenetic mechanisms involved in regulation of gene expression

## Genes

Firstly, we need to talk about DNA and genes. For many years scientists have been looking for specific genes that cause health issues. The theory behind this is that if a ‘bad’ gene can be isolated, it could be modified so that a disease doesn’t take hold. Or if we know we have a ‘bad gene’, we can take steps to modify its possible adverse effects. The mastectomy operations of Angelina Jolie, who has the ‘BRCA’ gene mutation, are a case in point. But as astrologers know all too well, correlation is not the same as causation. It is a materialistic way of looking at disease, and although this can have scientific benefits, it is now crystal clear that ill-health is not only a result of certain physical genes (only true in a very small percentage of cancer cases) but also of psychological and environmental factors. Our lifestyle, and in particular stress, are now well-known culprits in generating ill-health.

## DNA

We have approximately two metres of DNA, which contains our genes, in every cell. This is wrapped up in histones, with chromatin on the outside layer. There are tags or markers that sit on the chromatin which allow individual genes to be accessible or not – i.e. these tags effectively turn genes on or off, but importantly the genes themselves don’t change.

Recent research suggests that non-physical factors, such as trauma, caused by starvation or adverse environmental factors like inadequate nurturing, result in tags being formed. These can be passed onto offspring – in some species for up to fourteen generations. Epigenetics studies how this works and has disproved the “born with bad genes” theory. It has

shown the vital importance of environment in switching access to genes on or off. When certain genes are switched off we have less protection against illness. In this article I make the case for Ceres being a signifier of the environment – both globally and personally – and thus epigenetics.

She could be a helpful archetype in providing tips for describing a personally healing environment.

### Epigenetics

The term epigenetics ('epi' means upon or above) was first coined in the 1940s, and the field has come a long way since then. Wider research started in the 1980s, and blossomed after the end of the Human Genome Project in 2006. It is known that epigenetic instructions, i.e. the tags mentioned above, lead to different cells being made. The switching on and off of these tags above the genes is known as methylation, which occurs at the embryo stage of cell division. These markers are influenced by such things as environment, the mother's diet, cigarettes and stress. As with genes, the methylation can be passed down, so the environment of the maternal grandmother is very important, as a mother's eggs are formed at her birth. The father's lifestyle is also relevant for the methylation passed down from the sperm. These markers can, however, also develop after birth as a result of abuse, poor diet or lack of love. One study I read suggested that there is no cancer where methylation is *not* present.

However, there is good news. Although genes cannot be changed (without genetic manipulation), methylation is reversible, and healing many illnesses (some scientists suggest not only cancer, but also such conditions as diabetes, Alzheimer's, and Huntington's) is proving possible.

Some of the research being done in this area is very exciting, and I refer you to the work of Joe Dispenza, Bruce Lipton and Moshe Szyf (a great TED talk). These are just a few of the many people involved in this field. The work on telomeres – part of our chromosomes, known to be involved in aging – by Elizabeth Blackburn and Elissa Epel is also very interesting. Scientists are gaining insights from the many studies with twins too, who of course have the same genes, but whose methylation can be different. This would be interesting research astrologically, also.

### The challenge

Understanding epigenetics is important not only for scientists, who are of course working on drugs to affect methylation, but for all of us. It means that we can have some control of our health through an understanding of not only our diet but also our environment in the broadest sense, such as how and where we spend our time. This applies both to our physical environment and particularly to our work and the people we have around us. Stress is known as one of the major causes of methylation. Bruce Lipton's book *The Biology of Belief*

explains how our beliefs also affect our health. And of course, for parents or prospective parents, the state of our own DNA is very important! Our lifestyle affects the future, for us and for our offspring. A useful if rather scary thought.

For astrologers, in particular medical astrologers, this is vital information. As a non-medical astrologer, I often discuss health issues with clients, as it is something with which many people struggle. I wanted to know how I could find some help from the horoscope. Being able to discuss and provide tips for a helpful environment to promote better health is something I can offer. One of the major factors I consider is the placement of Ceres and her aspects.

### Ceres People

The second factor I researched, to see whether Ceres could be interesting in the epigenetic arena, was Ceres' placement in the charts of prominent genetic scientists. One of my favourite stories is 'The Genome Wager' made in 2009 between Rupert Sheldrake and Lewis Wolpert. "By 1 May 2029, given the genome of a fertilised egg of an animal or plant, we will be able to predict in at least one case, all the details of the organism that develops from it, including any abnormalities." If this is true, Wolpert wins a case of the finest port. If not, then Sheldrake gets to enjoy it. Both these developmental biologists have the Sun in aspect to Ceres – an indicator I use for vocation. Interestingly, the study of epigenetics has brought biologists and developmental psychologists together.

### Scientists and Ceres aspects

In a lecture I gave at the AA Conference in 2017, I listed a few prominent genetic scientists and their Ceres placements, and I'll cite a few of my favourites here. I am looking at aspects because I find them very important, and they are particularly useful here as birth times were not available for many of them.

Several of my example scientists working in this area had aspects between Ceres and the Sun (mentioned earlier), one of whom is Barbara McClintock – more about her anon. Three important people with an aspect between Ceres and Mercury are Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Charles Darwin and Conrad H. Waddington (who coined the term 'epigenetics' in 1942). Their ideas (Mercury) were clearly instrumental in later research.

Two people with aspects between Ceres and Saturn are Rosalind Franklin, whose work led to defining the structure (Saturn) of DNA, and the founder (Saturn) of modern genetics, Gregor Mendel.

Mendel and Lamarck also have Ceres in aspect with Uranus, which seems very fitting for their cutting-edge work at the time.

There are several scientists with aspects between Ceres and Pluto, which suggests deep research in this area. Among them

## Ceres: ruler of healing environments?

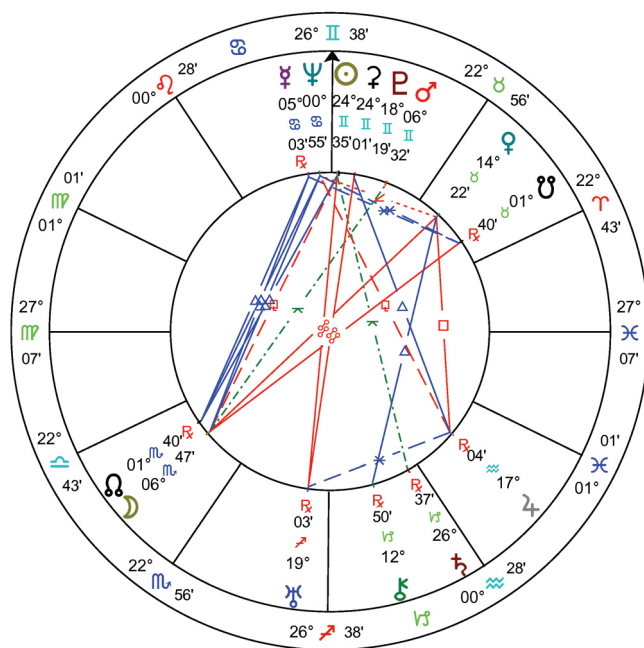
are Charles Darwin, well known in the field of evolution and for his seminal book *On The Origin of the Species* (1859); Francis Crick, known for finding the structure of DNA following on from Franklin's work; and Elizabeth Blackburn.

Lastly, in the “you couldn't make this stuff up” category, is Arthur Riggs, a geneticist working with epigenetics and methylation, born in 1939 in a town called – Ceres!

### Barbara McClintock

Looking at Barbara McClintock's chart made me even more convinced I might be onto something by associating Ceres with genetic scientists and epigenetics. She has the Sun and Ceres closely conjunct in Gemini, for me suggesting she has a ‘Ceres vocation’. She won the Nobel Prize in 1983 for her work on cytogenetics, a study of how chromosomes relate to cell behaviour.

Her work was carried out using maize – definitely Ceres at work here, since she is the goddess of grain! During the 1940s and 1950s, McClintock demonstrated that genes are responsible for turning physical characteristics on and off. She developed theories to explain the suppression and expression of genetic information from one generation of maize plants to the next.



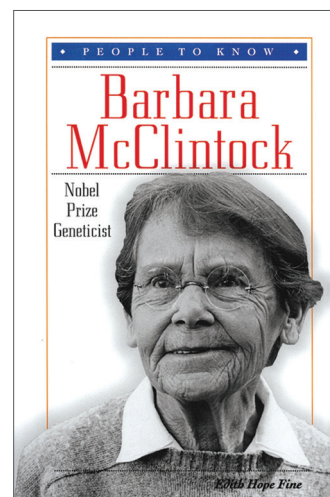
Barbara McClintock Natal Chart

Jun 16 1902, Mon 12:00 pm EST +5:00 Hartford, Connecticut

### McClintock and the Theory of Epigenetics – see birth chart

After initial scepticism about her research, her work became well understood in the 1960s and 1970s as other scientists

confirmed her ideas on the mechanisms of genetic changes. She was truly ahead of her time, being the first to correctly speculate the basic concept of epigenetics, i.e. that heritable changes in gene expression are not caused by DNA changes. This was more than forty years before the concept of epigenetics was formally studied. Her Sun-Ceres conjunction is opposite the planet of innovation, Uranus, and her reputation as an innovator in her field lives on. She is the only woman to have received an unshared Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Ceres and Jupiter form a trine in her chart, perhaps highlighting her ability to form a philosophy in Ceres' domain.



### Why Ceres and environment

There are two things I considered when looking at Ceres' connection to the environment. One was her position in the solar system and the other was the myth she is best known for – ‘The Rape of Persephone’ [see below].

### The astronomy

Ceres orbits between Mars and Jupiter and has a cycle of about four to five years. Mars and his sign, Aries, are associated with the first signs of spring. The glyphs show a breaking through or an initial sprouting of a seed. Jupiter is a planet associated with growth. Ceres operating between these two planets suggests ‘soil’ to me. She is an earth goddess, after all! Plants need a good environment in which to grow. The right amount of light, water and nutrients are vital for promoting growth after the initial awakening of the seed.

### The Rape of Persephone

And then there is the myth, and two parts are relevant here. Ceres is associated with abundance. When her daughter is with her, food is plentiful. When Ceres is happy, she makes crops grow. However, when her daughter is away she is unhappy and so she creates winter.

Since 2006 we have become more and more aware of food shortages, food waste and in particular changes in global weather which affects the environment. Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*, highlighting global warming problems, was aired in 2006. Is Ceres responsible for weather? Creating hostile environments for crops when she is upset?

The myth also tells of her teaching agriculture and the art of cultivation to Triptolemus. She knows how to create the right



environment to produce flourishing crops and her knowledge of planting and reaping is passed down to the rest of Greece through her student. Both these parts of the myth suggest to me that Ceres has a deep understanding of environments that support healthy growth.

### Personal environments

My research on Ceres has been ongoing since her reclassification in 2006 and has covered many of her themes. During this time I was fortunate enough to have permission from two people to share their stories in my search to gain understanding in the area of health and environments. Both women had been diagnosed with cancer with little prospects of long-term survival without aggressive treatment, according to doctors. And both are, at the time of writing, cancer-free. I wanted to know how they managed their illnesses and interviewed them in an attempt to match their stories with the position of Ceres in their horoscopes. I am grateful to these brave and feisty women for the honest discussions that ensued. Both cases have helped my research and understanding enormously. My theory is that if we do the positive things suggested by Ceres, it can aid in our healing. These things are different for each person. My aim was to understand what each woman found most instrumental in her own healing. Although they pursued many of the same strategies to get rid of cancer, the emphasis on what was found most beneficial is different.

### Jenny's\* breast cancer – see chart

The elements I will use to discuss this case are:

- Ceres in Cancer in the 8<sup>th</sup> House
- Ceres square Mercury
- Ceres quincunx Venus

Of course with breast cancer I would also look at the Moon in the chart. Jenny is childless and always wanted to have children (and cats, dogs and horses), but alas, that was not to be. However my aim here was to investigate the link to Ceres.

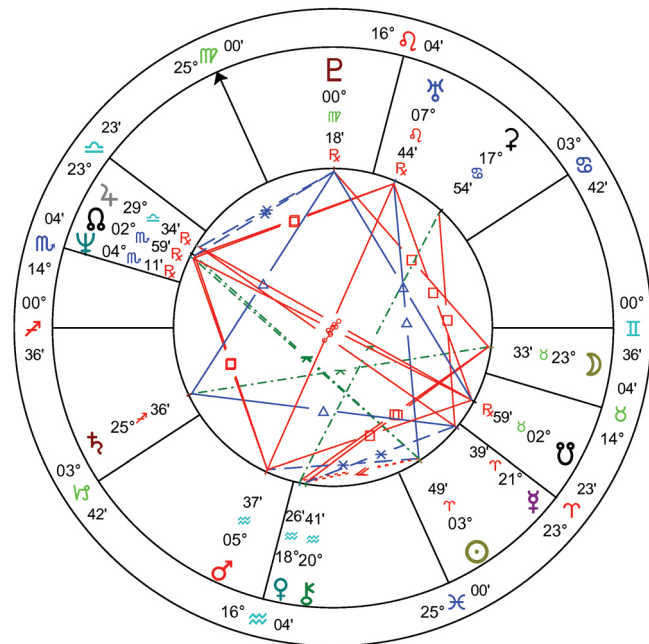
### Ceres in Cancer in the 8th House

“Thank God for my mother!”

One of the first things Jenny said was that she was glad to have her mother (sign of Cancer) around, as treating cancer was very expensive! (8<sup>th</sup> house). Her mother helped her pay for many things, one of them being a very good juicer. She credits juicing, supplements, herbs and general nutrition as being the main factor in her healing. After just eight weeks of strict juicing her main tumour had shrunk and the others had gone. The sign of Cancer (nutrition/food) is visible here.

Her family and friends are really important in her life. She belongs to a community of women, most of whom are astrologers. Deep conversations about life and especially dirty

jokes (8<sup>th</sup> house) kept her going during the tough times. Her community speaks her language (Mercury).



'Jenny' Natal Chart

Mar 24 1958, Mon 11:35 pm UT +0:00 Shoreham-by-sea

### Mercury in Aries square Ceres

Her understanding of science and nutritional processes also falls more under the auspices of Mercury, but of course this Ceres-Mercury aspect acts together with their signs. She has become a kind of lobbyist (Aries) for juicing and nutrition and was very enthusiastic when talking about using vitamin B17 from apricot kernels. Her own understanding of herbs (Mercury and Ceres) was also a vital tool for her. Her sister (Mercury) had breast cancer too, but was not interested in the nutritional path. Perhaps this was a factor in Jenny's avid reading of nutrition and processes associated with it. She is adamant that if you have cancer you *must* understand sugar and starch and how that affects the body. Juicing must be fibre-free. When she speaks about these topics you can definitely hear Mercury in Aries! It was also clearly visible when at one appointment the hospital gave her a brochure about dying. She was incredibly angry, saying, "I'm not going to die!"

### Venus in Aquarius quincunx Ceres

Jenny's Venus not only plays a role in her understanding of sugar, but also in the fact that she has a very deep belief in astrology (Venus in Aquarius). She had hope and self-belief in the combination of conventional medicine and her own knowledge. (Lipton's work is relevant here.) She even made a deal with her specialist that if he could promise to keep her alive until a certain date, the astrology of which she explained, she would agree to do chemotherapy (which he did, and she did!)

### Transits and Huber Age Points

When Jenny's Ceres was triggered by Age Point at age 10 and 46, there were vital clues to the background of the illness, and that was food for thought. It showed what was important for her and could be useful in looking at what she needs around her now – such as animals and nature. Ceres in Cancer in the 8<sup>th</sup> house suggests that having close friends and a private nurturing space with water nearby would be a good environment for her. When I interviewed Jenny, she had Pluto transiting Ceres exactly. I have found that this transit tends to move people to a better environment, but it can feel like tough love.

Jenny needed to move because of her illness, but had wanted to stay in nature. She needed easier access to shops and amenities than from her beloved house, but had thought this combination would be difficult to find. She wanted to be closer to her mother, but that area was very built-up and expensive. One day when driving with her mother she spotted a house and said "I'd love to live there!". Lo and behold it came up for sale, and when I interviewed her she had just moved into this house in a new environment. It was in a town she never expected to like – suburbia! "But it is by a park with hundreds of birds – it is blissful and full of light!". Sounds like Ceres at work here with Pluto helping by transiting the Ceres-Venus aspect. Venus in Aquarius loves light!

### Olivia's\* mantle cell lymphoma – see chart

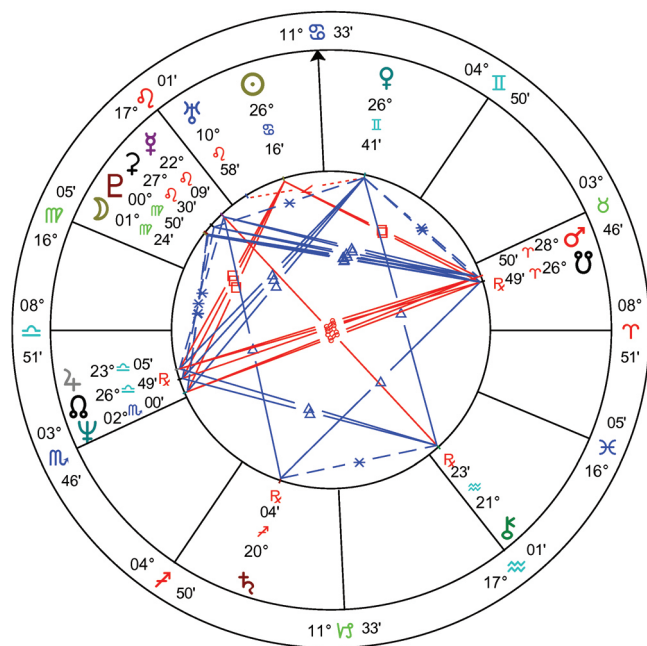
Ceres is in aspect with many planets so I will combine factors to discuss this case. They are:

- Ceres in Leo in the 11<sup>th</sup> house
- Ceres conjunct Moon
- Ceres conjunct Mercury
- Ceres sextile Venus
- Ceres trine Mars
- Ceres trine Saturn
- Ceres conjunct Pluto

### The stellium in the 11<sup>th</sup> house

"Black humour," said Olivia when I asked what saved her. I was delighted with this answer – what better description for Ceres sitting between Mercury and Pluto?

These three planets work together in the 11<sup>th</sup> house in some of her other thoughts too. In a situation that was disempowering, she felt that she had to take charge where she could: part of this were getting up, having a shower, getting dressed and making coffee every day before ward rounds, no matter how she felt, as was being able to refuse medicines she didn't feel were helping, which sometimes upset people. It was important for her to have some say – as far as she could – in her treatment, in order to retain a sense of control.



'Olivia' Natal Chart

Jul 19 1958, Sat 12:04 pm BST -1:00 London, United Kingdom

Her main healing came through the writing of a blog, later made into a book. It was a way of expressing her experiences and sharing both good and terrible things with others. The 11<sup>th</sup> house of community is present here (her blog followers, many of whom are like-minded astrologers) and was very important in her healing process. I would also attribute this to the Moon conjoining Ceres even though it is in a different sign. Belonging to a community is important and, as with Jenny, nutrition was also incredibly important. However for Olivia, spirituality and mindfulness took on a more vital role.

The Mercury-Pluto-Ceres combination is also visible in the amount of research she did. Olivia found that by understanding as much as she could, it put her on the same level as the doctors, who appreciated her understanding of her illness. This gave her control of her treatment and empowered her to have an opinion about it. It also educated some of the doctors! Her words were: "You are going to listen to me," and this was meant for everyone. Healing with a Pluto-Mercury aspect often comes from feeling that you are heard.

Olivia also realised that she had to do inner work and look at her fears. She believes you cannot heal if you have your mind ruling you, so her answer to this was mindfulness meditation. I loved her meditation imaginary retreat place – perfect for Ceres in Leo. "I went to a sunny beach where I was in a hammock in the dappled shade of a tree. The sun is life blood for me – I hate winter." Retreating to this place both in her mind and literally (more holidays in the sun are planned) is very nurturing.

### ***Mars in Aries trine Ceres***

Olivia spoke of the need to “do it my way”. It irritated her when others did things for her or she had to wait for hospital appointments. She needed to talk and write about her anger. That was her saving grace. “I had to forge my way on my own with alternatives, and my blog has made me into a kind of activist. People are still reading my blog, which I kept going. Many are finding that my story and my ideas are helping them.”

### ***Saturn in Sagittarius trine Ceres***

One of the things that gave her strength was her research. Olivia firmly believes that if you know what you’re dealing with it’s a lot easier to cope. She followed up every lead diligently (Saturn) to at least give herself the chance to try anything that would aid her recovery and, hopefully, survival. She said to the consultants: “Look, it works. I am proof that it works. It doesn’t need case studies and double-blind trials. I’m the proof”. She listened and reacted to what her body (Saturn) told her. Muscle testing became one of the techniques she used – sometimes with much hilarity when red wine and cheese were tested. A lot of alternative medicines and herbs have a disgusting taste, but she was willing to take horrible things if her body suggested they might do some good!

### ***Huber Age Point***

We discussed the Age Point trigger at age 27 which was very interesting and very relevant for her. One of the themes was food and anorexia, themes I often find when Ceres is problematic. Olivia attempted to discuss this with her mother, who was frightened of this possibility and said, “No, I’m sure it’s not that”. One of the main themes in her process was being heard. I think Cancer gave her a reason to find her own voice and put that into words so that the world can now hear her. A huge step in spiritual growth.

### ***Cases summary***

Olivia and Jenny have shown that it is possible to heal both physically and spiritually from having cancer. They did this by taking responsibility for their illness and taking charge of their own healing. Many doctors say that the most difficult patients are the ones who have better healing outcomes. It is vital to have supportive consultants and an environment that supports you in the way you need. Both women said that the role of their specialists was positive and crucial. What might have worked for Jenny and Olivia might not be what you need to heal.

I hope looking at Ceres in your horoscope, or those of your clients, might help you support both yourself and others in any healing process. Let’s turn off those ‘bad’ genes by getting the good ones turned back on.

This essay is based on Faye Blake’s talk ‘Off with the bad and on with the good’, delivered at the 2017 Astrological Association Conference. The recording of it can be downloaded for £5 or bought as a CD for £7.50 from the AA website at: <http://astrologicalassociation.com>. Click ‘CDs, DVDs & MP3s’ in the menu on the front page.

#### **Data**

\*Names changed to protect privacy

‘Jenny’: 24 March 1958, Shoreham-by-Sea, UK, 23:35 GMT.

‘Olivia’: 19 July 1958, London, UK, 12:04 BST.

Barbara McClintock: 16 June 1902, Hartford, Connecticut, time unknown.

Rupert Sheldrake: 28 June 1942, Newark-on-Trent, UK, 18:00 (A rating).

Lewis Wolpert: 19 October 1929, Johannesburg, South Africa, time unknown.

All other scientists mentioned: Blackburn, Darwin, Lamarck and Lipton – from Astrodatatabank; the rest (where available) from Wikipedia. No reliable birth times found.



Faye Blake. Photo by Cristina Stoian

Born in New Zealand, Faye Blake is the founder of the Amsterdam School of Astrology. A therapist and business consultant, she holds an MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology, and has spoken at many international conferences. Her book *Vocational Astrology* forms the basis of her tailor-made Vocational Apprenticeship program. Her website: <http://www.fayeblake.nl>.