The first organized system of astrology was that of the Babylonians, dated between 3200 BCE. It was primarily used as a tool of divination, through which the gods presented themselves as celestial symbols. Astronomy was very rudimentary at the time, but as it developed, so too did astrology, which was considered a science, along with medicine, mathematics, and alchemy.

In the occidental world, Aristotle’s model was accepted as the one true explanation of the structure of the universe. This persisted from the 3rd century BCE until the Copernican heliocentric system was endorsed by Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler, Galileo Galilei, and finally Isaac Newton. According to Aristotle, the Earth was the center of the world, with each of the planets rotating around it on concentric spheres, moved by angels, with the outermost sphere containing all the stars of the universe.

To make the zodiac chart on the back, begin by cutting the circle and the tub, and separating them, as seen at right. You can label the months and constellations using the chart below, or make up your own measurements of time and space. When you are finished, place the tub on the circle and rotate it to learn which stars can be seen in the sky during the time which seek you.
Despite their belief that the Earth was not the only body around which others orbit the astronomers were still baffled by the workings of the stars and were dedicated to understanding their influence in our lives. Brahe, Kepler and Galileo all practiced astrology and the casting of horoscopes, before it finally fell out of favor in Newton’s age.

In their lifetime, each made important contributions to the field of astronomy. Brahe proved that comets were not atmospheric phenomena, but bodies whose paths would have broken through the spheres in the sky. Galileo proved that the moon was an imperfect ‘world’ that Jupiter had moons, and that the sun had spots. Kepler’s ‘laws of planetary motion’ proved the elliptical orbits of the planets and the mathematical relationships of their paths.

It is challenging today to imagine that such important work was being conducted alongside the predicting of auspicious days for weddings and wars. If we held the work of the astronomers to today’s standards, would we dismiss their findings, considering the lack of scientific evidence backing their other views? How do we continue to justify the practice of astrology?