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Body, Mind & Spirit

Tarot Universe
Nancy Shavick
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What is there about the Tarot, a deck of seventy-eight cards bearing symbolic pictures, that could evoke enough fear that during certain eras of history one could have been jailed, exiled or even killed were it found in one's possession? Why, in spite of this aura of fear, do many thousands of people continue to use this centuries-old method to arrive at a deeper understanding of themselves and their lives? Can it be that the Tarot really is a powerful aid in developing a successful, healthy and spiritually fulfilling life?

Nancy Shavick, a college professor, publisher, writer and editor, is also a gifted counselor with an international Tarot clientele. Tarot Universe is her fifth book on the subject, and the culmination of her life project: "to demystify the meaning and purpose of the deck for the first time in its half-a-millennium history." She succeeds admirably. The book is thorough in its presentation of the history and symbolism of the cards and clear in its directions for their use. If one is new to the world of Tarot, her fear-allaying discussion of the purpose of the cards may help the reader develop a relationship with an ancient tool that was "designed to be a powerful force of evolution toward all that is good and sacred." According to the author, correct use of the Tarot can lead to a more enlightened consciousness and healing of the individual psyche as a result of interaction with the symbolic representation of universal truths encoded in the cards.

To those who fear that use of the Tarot may take the place of self-responsibility, Shavick counsels moderation in their use, stating that those who become obsessive or overly dependent upon the cards probably handle other areas of their lives in the same manner. Card reading was never meant to rule one's existence, but to provide a universal perspective to the issues at hand. If a client requests information concerning a love relationship, for example, the appearance of the card bearing "The Lovers" in a particular position in the spread may indicate the existence of passionate and mutually felt attraction. The manner, however, in which one chooses to act upon this attraction will differ according to many factors, only some of which may be

revealed in a particular reading. Shavick carefully details how to interpret this card and others in the deck as they relate to romance, work and business and spiritual growth.

Experienced Tarot readers may be disquieted by the instruction to read all cards as right-side-up, even if they should turn up reversed in a spread, and the author does not explain why she chooses to differ from other methods which advise a different interpretation of reversed cards. This, and a tendency to word the text as though both card reader and client are female, may be the only bumps in an otherwise smooth introduction to this ancient art. Illustrations of the various layouts, sample readings and a glossary of terms help clarify the instructions. Nancy Shavick's Tarot Universe is a thoughtful and enlightening presentation of a subject too long shrouded in mystery.

Kristine Morris