

New Book Review

S.T.A.R. Philosophy: Accept thyself as divine

Author: Nina Brown

3rd Edition (2013, 2014) 2017, Cauda Pavonis Publishing

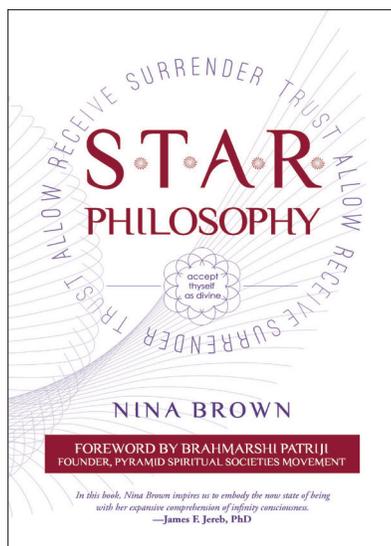
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Overview of the author and book



Nina Brown, a (1990) graduate of Bryn Mawr College, made a mark in the worlds of finance, business, healing, alternative medicine, was on an advisory board for President Clinton, advised for War Veterans, and is an international lecturer and acclaimed author. She wants to introduce STAR philosophy as a new model for consciousness in commerce and business.

The title notwithstanding, this book is not a treatise in philosophy. It speaks to the intuition and heart, rather than to the analytical mind. There are no numbered chapter headings, there is no index, but there is a glossary of sorts. Although there are no strict definitions, there are trigger words, and there are exhortations. For example, the author states *"My desire is that it (the book) will serve as a magical wand for the divine nature of all humans seeking new ways of being on earth"* (preface to the Third Edition, p. 11). And she passionately gives word to that wish in a three page elucidation: **Be the Love.** (Here paraphrased)

"Individually and collectively be enveloped in love. Hold in the core of your being, in your sacred heart, the intention and awareness of being precious, kind, wise, creative and playful, of service to others and yourself, confidently and joyfully, working together. Be who you are so that you will be the seed and fruit of the new earth" (cf Brown, 2017, pp.13-15).

The author describes the term S.T.A.R. as follows: (Brown, 2017, p 16):

"S.T.A.R.: *When one aligns with the will and love of the divine Creator*
SURRENDER *to the tranquility of knowing human divinity*
TRUST *in wholeness to express*
ALLOW *the human divinity to evolve*
RECEIVE *with appreciation and gratitude"*

Although the book talks about STAR philosophy, there is no definition of the term given in this book. There is one in her subsequent book: *The fascinated observer: a guide to embodying STAR philosophy* (Sweetland & Brown, 2017, pp. 24, 26):

“(This) means navigating through lenses of learning, loving and discerning, without resorting to harsh judgment, in keeping with STAR principles. STAR philosophy is a non-dogmatic collection of insights and ideas, meant as a baseline from which to build a completely empowered existence. There are no instructions, only suggestions. We encourage you to mold these ideas into a form that is perfectly adapted to you” (p. 24). “It is the activity through which we see creation through the eyes of oneness” (p. 26).

Let us revisit the acronym: **S.T.A.R.** also described as “an intuitive knowledge, a desire to live my life differently” (Brown, 2017, p 132).

First of all there is **SURRENDER**. We know that to surrender is a (very) most difficult thing to embody. It is not a giving up, but a readiness for transformation (Brown, 2017, p. 131). I came to Rosen Work on the wings of a hidden and perceptible attraction/pull that, according to Marion Rosen, “the body knows more than the mind”. I recognized Marion’s ability to be present to and treasure the body in all its energy and dimensions. She keenly welcomed the breath, face, skin, muscle tension and understood the many unspoken words. Nina Brown is also receptive to the wisdom of the body, following the meandering, instinctive, discursive path of intuition with a heart full of wonder and praise, gratitude and appreciation.

There is a structure, a discipline to surrendering. There is need to let go of holdings and a need to open up to unknown yet expected newness. On this point I find Nina Brown to be brilliant. Starting from her foundational conviction that “*It is our birth right to know ourselves as divine humans*” (Brown, 2017, p. 20), she enumerates practical applications of STAR philosophy to let go (surrender) the following :

- ... the role of being victim (Brown, 2017, p.139).
- ... the will to hold on to (control) the outcome of relationships (Brown, 2017, p. 145)
- ... the need and desire to blame (beyond forgiveness) (Brown, 2017, p. 148).
- ... the emotional charge from our thoughts, thus trusting the inner voice of our truth, allowing wisdom to guide our actions (Brown, 2017, p. 162).
- ... the will to advise, to teach and thus be liberated from believing we have a responsibility to heal the world and to recognize that all we are asked to do is to love the world. (Brown, 2017, p. 169).

In short, we are asked to give up inhibiting, addictive, toxic attitudes and habits of perception, thinking and feeling. And on the other side of the spectrum, we surrender to the tranquility and love of knowing that we are precious and beautiful (human divinity), of living every day as a “sacred moment.”

Then comes **TRUST**. Trust seems to me to be deeper than confidence. There is a wholeness, an inner completeness that becomes evident, that is expressed. This wholeness, this divine human, this godself, exists beyond doubt or argument, is wholesome, beyond space and time. Its very nature is being at home, is belonging, is KINDness, from within at one with the God desire, so evident in the universe. Trusting the wholesome expression of all that being.

Then there is the **ALLOWING** of this godself, the divine human to evolve and to find full expression.

And then to **RECEIVE** with appreciation and gratitude.

The Foundational ideas of the book include these additional concepts: **Stillness, Now** (present moment), **Inner work, Adversity** and a sense of what lies **Beyond**.

Stillness. The book invites a stillness and softness of mind, as well as a stillness and warmth of heart. Giving a sense that “there is a plan” and that we are being held, even when there is pain, chaos and pleasure as well. Mystics in varying traditions talk about being safe in that place, a diamond (“*At the center of our being is a point of nothingness, which is untouched...It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody.*”, Merton 1966/2000), a still place within a castle (Teresa of Avila, 1975), that place where *NAMASTE* originates. Brown calls it ‘the sacred heart,’ a place deeper than a chemical habit (Brown, 2017, p. 28f).

Now. It encapsulates Brown’s understanding of playfulness, and imagination. It is the present moment, away from past fears and pain, a place away from future overwhelm. It is the place of transformation, where attention turns to intention, where inner and collective relaxation turn to peace. This is the time/place where body awareness brings the observer to take everything into the heart, with feelings of joy and appreciation (Brown, 2017, p. 129).

Inner work. Inner wisdom will lead to peacefulness, when it is validated. There is a choice: “*To move all the thoughts that were filling my brain to my sacred heart*” (Brown, 2017, p. 103). In pain or conflict situations attention grows into intention, where the focus then changes from the other (*it’s their fault*) to how am I here? How can I act from my sacred heart?

Adversity is the chaos and pain whilst being with dark and unfamiliar energies. Adversity can be an opening to a stable grounding (of being accompanied by divine presence and love). The question becomes not to remedy the other /outer realities, but to grow more into accepting that there is a **Beyond** to being powerless, being vulnerable, a being beyond the sharp limits of life and companionship.

Beyond. The heart works with a heightened awareness of a reality that physically and structurally points beyond dimensions and (inter)connections. In grief and conflict when cellular memories come up of, e.g., fear and/or rejection, they can be consciously replaced by memories of acceptance and love. The heart goes beyond place to space in between the dots. Within darkness the heart knows to be seen, within isolation the heart feels connection. The particular opens up to what is beyond its boundaries. Place connects with space, place leads to space, place and space dance and mingle time and again.

My personal experience reading this book

As a reviewer, reading and reviewing this book was a deep journey for me. I felt like I was being tossed from performance to being, from the inner to the outer world, from quiet to turmoil, from bubbling

promises to empty dreams. And then there were moments of delicious vulnerability and unaccustomed clarity and peace. In the reading (seeing) I was being seen, in the feeling and speaking I was being heard, in the surrounding, happenstance experiences I felt guided and cared for. It almost feels as if I had a Rosen session.

I found the book interesting, instructive, inspiring and compelling, and at times simplistic, elusive and even irksome. Some of my buttons were pushed, some I became aware of, some I almost couldn't see or admit, like chaos and uncertainty.

Nina Brown writes easily in the book about incidents in her own life. Someone does or does not turn up in time, and that influences her day or life. These last two months have been similarly intense for me. I have become aware of several changes in my being and practices that are quite significant and indicative.

During the last two months I have been in the iron grip of chaos, almost unable to put pen to paper. I can remember a dream or two. In one dream I am walking through an alley way of tall trees pierced by a bright and playful autumn sun, and lorikeets colorfully darting about. I started spending another period of time in meditation later on in the day. Here are some other moments of insight:

- **Breath.** I am more aware of my breathing, which is now less controlled. And I noted something interesting about the pathway of my breathing. For many years I have been breathing through the nostrils and directing the breath flow to and from the oropharynx. Of late I breathe more through the nostrils along the lower and middle conchae and at other times along the middle and higher conchae into the lower and higher nasopharynx: Three pathways therefore.
- These breathing restrictions and pathways that I discovered came because the author challenged me through her life stories by unearthing and sometimes pushing (neatly) hidden buttons: fear of the future, of planning, fear of failure, the fear of success, of pleasure, the fear of feeling. In short the fear and possibility of living (to the full).
- **Relaxation.** I experience a deeper relaxation. The other day I felt my eyes relax, then my toes and then like a shiver, the rest of my body relaxed.
- My **touch** is becoming less imposing, more receptive.
- My **posture** in standing and walking and sitting is more relaxed and straighter, sustained from and around my pelvis and hinge.

The book invited me to be in the present, to be an unbiased observer, to 'play the now moment':

"color, go, pretend, travel, marvel, explore, discover, dance, paint, cook, decorate, dream, shop, garden, sing, play games, listen, be curious, see movies, visit strange places, laugh, walk barefoot, take pictures, day dream" (Brown, 2017, p. 91).

Conclusion

And now I reflect on the book and ask whether it would be of interest to Rosen Practitioners? The author has written the book with individuals in mind, though groups could benefit as well. She does not claim to be a therapist, but communicates healthy and life-giving insights. Her style is engaging and challenging. I am glad to have read the book. I have been touched by it and have come to a deeper stillness within myself.

The standouts for me are:

- * the *exhortations*: Stop being VICTIM, stop being TEACHER, stop being HEALER. All in the sense of taking away responsibility and dignity from the other.
- * the *words*: "grief is words unspoken" and the words are: "I love you" (Brown, 2017, p. 96). These same words: "I love you", she recommends instead of "I forgive you" (Brown, 2017, p. 99).
- * The *insight*: the lack of self-esteem leaves a void.
- * The *insight*: Habits and patterns (of thought, feeling, perception) are formed and chemically sustained (by neuropeptides), and hence can become addictive. (Brown, 2017, p. 29).

Our physical, intellectual, emotional and therefore spiritual reality is not isolated but related. Birthing and dying are intense experiences of connection and separation. Individually and collectively being alone is not possible. Being alone is not true. Being alone has no beginning and no future. Just as individually our body connects mind and heart and spirit, so collectively we are twinned not only in our flesh, not only in our thinking, not only in our feeling but also in our breathing. We are one and all "spirited."

"Watch, follow, honor the breath," says Marion.

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