

The usefulness of Affirmations

by Furio Sclano

The practice of affirmations was taught to kriya yoga practitioners by Paramahansa Yogananda, but he did not invent it. A few years before Yogananda's birth, actually, a few New Thought groups used to practice them, though in a different way compared to Yogananda's.

Man has different layers of mind. In a simple way, it can be stated that the main levels are two: the conscious mind and the subconscious mind. The conscious mind makes decisions and discriminates; the subconscious mind, instead, is more or less like an enormous warehouse, able to contain whatever perception of any kind a person has had during his life (and probably also during all the others). Perceptions, images, sounds, emotions and so on are all stored in the subconscious mind. In men's minds there is a continuous interaction between conscious and subconscious mind. The contents of the subconscious deeply influence people's lives.

According to New Thought theology, one of the products of God's creation is a Universal mind (the full theory is a bit more complicated, but this is more or less the summary explanation), which has a tendency to reflect as real experiences and circumstances in people's lives their main mental states. In a few words, each individualized mind is a portion of Universal mind and so, each one of us attracts in his/her life circumstances corresponding to his/her own mental state.

I like this definition, in order to give a very general idea of the concept:

- *External circumstances are a projection of one's states of consciousness.*

Paramahansa Yogananda never dealt about the concept of Universal mind in his writings (or I have never read anything about that, specifically), but by explaining the usefulness and ways of working of the affirmations, he highlighted concepts which are very similar and compatible to New Thought ideas; because of this and of my personal experience, I am confident that the concepts explained in this article are true.

What is exactly an affirmation?

An affirmation is a *statement of truth*. As I wrote before, the conscious mind is able to discriminate (i.e. Noticing the difference between black and white, right and wrong and so on), whilst the subconscious mind cannot understand the difference between a real experience and a product of imagery or of a suggestion.

We can work with affirmations on two different levels: material and spiritual.

1st level: from conscious to subconscious mind (material level)

As I already wrote earlier in this article, conscious mind and subconscious mind interact continuously.

When, for example, we pass through a bad experience generating a trauma, after a while we may remove it from our conscious mind, but it remains deeply stored in the subconscious. That particular episode, though not consciously recalled every time, is likely to influence the behavior of the person who experienced it in many situations, until it is consciously recalled and solved (many times this may happen only with the help of a professional therapist).

If we work with affirmations on this level, because of the continuous interactions between the two levels of mind just explained, we try to condition the subconscious in order to reach a general awareness of what we affirm.

Let's go to practice:

Imagine that you need some kind of healing; in this case you may affirm:

I am in perfect health, happy and serene. Everything in my life is in divine order

In my experience, I have noticed so far that the results of affirmations are never *supernatural* ones. By affirming this way, for example, you will get in touch with people who may help you, or find yourself in the best place where you can be healed. Everything happens always according to the laws of nature.

The inner basis of working is the law of cause and effect. If you are convinced that you already have something (health, material goods and so on), you will have an awareness of that possession. With that awareness in your mind, the Universal mind will have the tendency to transform your mental state in real circumstances.

How to practice:

The practice is a very simple one.

Affirm the sentence aloud and keep on doing it at least ten times, by lowering progressively the volume. Your last vocal pronunciation should be only a whisper. End the session by affirming a few times only mentally. You are encouraged to practice more than once a day and for a long time, if necessary. If you meditate on a regular basis, immediately after meditation or before going to bed are the best moments of the day (by going to sleep soon, you will fix in your subconscious the content of your affirmation).

Keep in mind:

In order to have satisfactory results, you must cultivate:

- *conviction* (if you affirm, for instance, that you are healthy and you keep on being convinced that you are ill, affirmations won't work, so do your best to believe in what you affirm).
- The awareness that you *already have* what you affirm (it will be easier to have results).
- *Acceptance* (feel worth of what you affirm; claim it).

A famous book titled "The Secret", by Rhonda Byrne, deals with this kind of concepts. *The Secret* is really not a secret, as New Thought groups have dealt with this kind of concepts for decades. I like defining this kind of affirmations as: *ego-based affirmations*.

2nd level: from law to grace (spiritual level)

"From Law to Grace" is the title of an article that Mr. Davis published in the sixties on a magazine.

The main reason of man's problems in life is the sense of ego (sense of independent existence). Our philosophy explains that at the innermost core of his being, man is divine; made in the image and likeness of God. Differently from classic Christian concepts, which suggest man as a creation separated from God, Yoga explains the concept of *Unity*: Man is God individualized or, rather, and individualized unity of pure consciousness (the word "God" is a conventional one, indicating a sort of eternal intelligence, omniscient and omnipresent). The goal of any spiritual practice rooted in truth is the realization (knowledge and experience) of man's divine nature.

Everyone wants a happy life. This is a normal desire. Basically we can affirm and/or visualize that we have this or that, but as long as we behave this way, our sense of ego goes on to be in control of our lives and our ego really has no idea about what is best for us. It took me a long time to understand this concept, thanks to a few mistakes I made when I tried (with little success, honestly) to force events to occur.

God's Grace

My guru-teacher Roy Eugene Davis, in one of his old books¹, gave this definition of God's Grace:

God's grace is the spirit of God moving through man to transform and regenerates him

The secret for cooperating with God's Grace is to let things go, without trying to force anything to happen. When we have the full awareness that we are individualized units of Pure Consciousness, we know for sure

1 Studies in Truth – Roy Eugene Davis – CSA Press 1969

that we are part of a divine plan, we are aware that we can have what we need, simply by trusting the actions of Grace. At that point, we don't need ego-based affirmations anymore (i.e. we don't need them for material purposes). We simply act for the best, releasing to God the results of our actions.

Realizing one's divine essence of being is the only worthwhile goal to reach in life. When a man has that divine remembrance, everything else is just a detail.

When we are sure that what we want first is spiritual understanding, we can still use affirmations, but we do that only in order to have the awareness of our divine essence of being. By doing this way, we practice affirmations on a higher level.

Mr. Davis suggested this affirmation to me and others:

The Radiant purity of my essence of being constantly illumines my mind and consciousness

You can use for your practice the same technique explained above.

When I first started practicing affirmations, years ago, I was not able yet to fully understand the concept of Grace and so my affirmations were ego-based ones. I often receive mails from sincere people, who asks me questions like: what if God's will is different from mine? This is a silly question, because each one of us is God in its outward expression. I have decided, anyway, to describe both levels of affirmations, because I needed time in order to understand the difference and mentally accept what was best for me to do. I suppose that for at least a few of you the process will be more or less the same.

God's will will be done no matter if you cooperate or not. Each of us can cooperate with the trends of spiritual evolution or, instead, decide to resist.

Go for the best; this is my personal suggestion.

With best wishes for fast spiritual advancement.

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