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Issues of Transparency in Zeitgeist & Venus Project

Here in the real world on planet Earth we accept when we get stuff wrong or don't know the answers to matters [this is usually not the case on the zeitgeist forum], particularly when encountering someone who clearly has more knowledge in a subject matter. Lets say for instance...accounting ?

Man arrives and says:

“There is no current transparency regarding donations to TVP”

– *clearly this man is aware there is a charity he is donating to and is asking for the financial records of the charity to be displayed for members to read.*

Moderator replies:

“That’s not correct. The Venus Foundation is a 501(c)3 corporation, and its tax returns must be made available to the public upon request as specified under US law. See: www.muridae.com/publicaccess/rules_described.html”

- Simply informing the man that they have to file 990 forms and they will legally be made public, but this does not answer the transparency question, because they are not available on the site itself for view freely.

Man replies:

“Public access must be provided promptly on request by allowing inspection of the documents at the organization’s office or offices, and by providing copies of the documents promptly in response to any in-person request or within 30 days for a written request. However, organizations don’t have to provide copies if they make these materials widely available through publication on the Internet.

That isn’t what I meant by problems with transparency. First off if a millions people come to this site wanting information do you really expect, or even want, those million people to request that information from TVP? It would be a massive waste of time and resources in regards to both parties and to my knowledge this information is not available through publication on the Internet. Second, unless a person has been previously educated in accounting practices those documents will be complete gibberish to them. Third, even if they have an accounting background, assets, liabilities, expenses and so forth are usually lumped into general categories and while this gives someone a general idea of the amount of money coming in and going out, it tells little as to how that money is specifically being spent.”

- Further clarifying the point he means by transparency, and proving he has knowledge in accountancy and understands more than the average member who would view the documents.

Moderator then replies:

“I agree with you then. Just replace “no transparency” with “no transparency that you can understand, with only access to financial documents and an unwillingness to take the weekly tour of their work.” “

– Insinuating the man has no knowledge about the financial records and can’t understand them and would need to spend his money travelling to the venus project to get his financial queries answered.

Man replies:

“I’ve taken accounting classes and I’ve requested and looked at an organizations financial reports. From your response I would guess that you haven’t. If that’s the case I urge you to request either TVP’s or a local Universities financial reports and see if you feel the same way after that.

As for the tour I would love to go. I would like to do a lot of things. Like visit the friends from Japan that I made while I was there last summer teaching English. Or to visit my friends in Kentucky and Texas. Or to visit and stay at some Eco-Villages for a couple weeks to learn more about them. Unfortunately I work, I go to school full time, I’m involved in several student organizations, and I support myself while doing this. Finding the time and money to take off and travel across several states is not something that I can do for quite a while. The fact is that this is true of most people. I would guess that for 99.99% of the people who are interested in this movement taking a trip to Florida and taking the tour is just not an option for one reason or another. Fresco or Roxanne or other people consistently telling others they don’t understand and that they need to go take the tour is unreasonable.”

- what rational human being could argue with this ?

Moderator replies:

“Regarding the “transparency,” the tax documents are available in several places. 2008’s is here:

dynamodata.fdncenter.org/990_pdf_archive...777_200812_990EZ.pdf

Given the small amount of money raised in 2008, and the fact that their goal at that point it working towards making a movie, I think any competent accountant should be able to determine how much money they have received, and what they have spent it on. When 2009's is required, I am sure it will be available as well.

If, after reviewing that form, and looking at the plan on the web site, a person can't tell how they are using donations, well then I can't help them.”

- Well in fact it seems that the moderator couldn't help them anyway judging from his inability to listen to the man, the man has already told the moderator he is accounting savvy, and all he required was some transparency of the documents to review, but finally he provided the document.

The man replies:

“The revenue of Future by Design is much smaller than previous financial documents I've looked at and thus it is much easier to understand. I think that this link should be provided on the main website so that it is easier for people to see.”

- implying he is grateful for this otherwise hidden document, and stating it was different to the document he had seen elsewhere, one which I have seen here perhaps ? <http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0ArJDBNPgftvudGMtWVRfMGFUZ0hCNE91ZEKzQ3hzLUE&hl=en>

Moderator replies:

“Thanks– now I hope the reason for my frustration with people's saying that the information is not transparent enough is more understandable. I am interested in what documents you have seen that are different?”

- making out that the document he provided was easily visible and found by any member of the group, when in

fact it is not at all, and one simply has to look at the link he provided to see it is not even stored on their webpage. Also asking what other documents have been provided for him to see, I have provided that one above.

Man replies:

“I had assumed that the amount of money Future by Design received...was still more than I now know it is. I can see now though that there is good transparency [** he means within the document*]. Perhaps I’ll send an e-mail to TVP suggesting that a transparency section be added to the website listing that link, and giving periodic updates concerning how much funds are currently available and what project they are currently trying to finance with it.

I would hope that this would significantly stem the amount of questions regarding the donations and transparency.”

- proving further that transparency is an issue that needs to be made clear in the venus project, and that the documents are understandable and should be made available to prevent any claims of fraud.

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~ by anticultist on January 7, 2010.

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9 Responses to “Issues of Transparency in Zeitgeist & Venus Project”

1. Hello,

This blog was brought to my attention and I wanted to leave a comment to clarify my feelings about this matter. I am the “Man” aka Animus on the Zeitgeist Movement forums who was engaging in this discussion with the moderator.

The original thread can be found here and my comments start on page 2.

http://www.thezeitgeistmovement.com/joomla/index.php?option=com_kunena&Itemid=99999&func=view&catid=3&id=215203&limit=10&limitstart=10#215603

My previous experience dealing with an organizations Tax Documents was from my University, not from seeing Future by Designs tax documents located somewhere else. Seeing as my University deals with millions upon millions of dollars it was very complex documents and money was lumped into large categories that gave little information as to how that money was actually being spent. Having looked at Future by Designs tax documents I found them very easy to understand and this is why I now feel that TVP has good transparency. As you mentioned above the only suggestion I have for TVP is to provide a link to that tax information on their website so others can more easily see that they are a responsible transparent organization.



Dustin VanDeBerg said this on [January 9, 2010 at 12:10 am](#) | [Reply](#)

2. Hi there, sorry to quote you, I tried to maintain anonymity, but I am happy you have come here to clarify your view.



anticultist said this on [January 9, 2010 at 1:05 am](#) | [Reply](#)

3. Transparency is an issue I believe would benefit any organisation, for example Network of European Technocrats do a better job, but still suffer from not doing a good job, whilst these folks manage a better job:

<http://www.soschildrensvillages.org.uk/sos-childrens-charity/every-penny-counts>

I'd still like to see a breakdown of say wages, names of employees, and other smaller details. (Even down to, say supplier of paper.)

Such information can also be useful (What if your a paper supplier and can do them a better deal! why in my last job I was able to in a day find a better supplier that gave more quality stuff, for less cost, just because I knew how much it cost after a bit of digging around.)

Its a shame its like trying to get blood out of a stone most of the time when it comes to offering up suggestions and ideas to improve things. (Which is why so many people just don't bother!)



Nanos said this on [January 9, 2010 at 2:46 am](#) | [Reply](#)

4. I have recently been doing some uni coursework on a module called 'understanding financial reports' which entailed pouring over the 220 page adidas group annual report from 2008. so i can certainly vouch for how hard it really is to get down to specific details when you really need them.

luckily though the widespread acceptance of IFRS (international financial reporting standards) is leading to greater transparency all the time as new regulations are put in place on what details companies are required to produce. but even with all of these rules and checks there are still far too many opportunities for companies simply choose what to say and what not to say. particularly when it comes to the fine details.

but at the very least these documents should be easily accessible for all to see. for example if you look up the website of any large limited liability company you can think of and then go to the corporate or investment section of their site, you should easily find all financial reports available to view and download going back for many years. the venus project would benefit from following this trend. if adidas and thornntons and who ever else can do it, then why cant a non profit organisation who supposedly has nothing to hide?

really its just bad business sense not to make this information easily accessible for anyone who wants to see it. if the venus project doesnt do something about this, their credibility will continue to go down hill in my opinion.



logan86 said this on [January 9, 2010 at 4:23 am](#) | [Reply](#)

5. ok an email regarding this issue has been sent to Roxanne Meadows. meadows@thevenusproject.com, she replied to other emails I have sent in the past to this email address, so if this one is not replied to that says something clear to me.

Whether she decides to deal with the issue or ignore it will be very telling about their willingness for transparency, and their respect for people who have issues with their business tactics.

Here is the original email, anyone saying you should contact the venus project directly about this issue now has evidence to show it has been attempted.

Hello Roxanne

As you may be aware there are discussions about the issue of transparency of your two companies.

Your current website holds a page where donations and store are held, and it is unclear which section of this goes to the 501c non profit company, and which section goes to the profit arm of the company.

Since you have volunteers working for free marketing your products via the zeitgeist movement, promoting the videos, merchandise and books, and you are also getting income from lectures and tours.

It seems advantageous for you to clear this matter up by stating on your website donations & sales go to which area of each company.

As people are becoming aware that you have Venus project inc/global cybervisions [http://www.manta.com/coms2/dnbcompany_hxlxws]& future by design npo [stated on your store page], I think it might be to your benefit to have a transparency page showing what the incomes from both sections are being used for as well. Perhaps by adding all your documents of annual income and spending.

This information is very hard to come by without detailed searches, and is causing many issues among people, because they are unsure what their money and purchases is going to and what you are doing with it.

Hopefully you will see it as a bit of friendly advice to clear the matters up, as this will be beneficial to any doubts people have about your companies, and will perhaps give people advertising your materials information to show you are acting honorably.

I look forward to your reply and any further information you can add to these suggestions.

Lets see if we get any kind of remedy and rational response to clear this matter up, or any further information that clears some of the information presented.



[anticultist](#) said this on [February 2, 2010 at 6:54 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

- <http://anticultist.wordpress.com/2010/01/18/the-venus-project-is-not-just-non-profit/#comment-162>

Read the replies and the ongoing emails in the link above.



[anticultist](#) said this on [February 4, 2010 at 7:08 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

6. There is no excuse for The Venus Project, Inc. not being prominently displayed, nor is there an excuse for them blurring their non-profit and for-profit sectors on their website. They have thousands of kids from around the world helping them sell their shit. The least they can do is have honest business practices.

The money is going into making more models and keeping their home...and this is supposed to somehow help the world move towards a Resource Based Economy? I want to save the polar bears, so I am going to sit at home and sew some stuffed animals to raise awareness. Can I have some money?

So the Venus Project is into selling propaganda materials to nerdy do-gooders. Nothing wrong with that, just don't disguise it with some phoney activist movement. This is fraudulent.



[michi0713](#) said this on [February 5, 2010 at 2:52 am](#) | [Reply](#)

7. [...] Issues of Transparency in Zeitgeist & Venus Project [...]

[Zeitgeist Blogs: Zeitgeist is a Mind Heist « Zeitgeist Movement Exposed](#) said this on [November 10, 2010 at 9:10 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

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[Zeitgeist Blogs: Zeitgeist is a Mind Heist « Zeitgeist Movement Exposed](#) said this on [November 10, 2010 at 9:11 pm](#) | [Reply](#)

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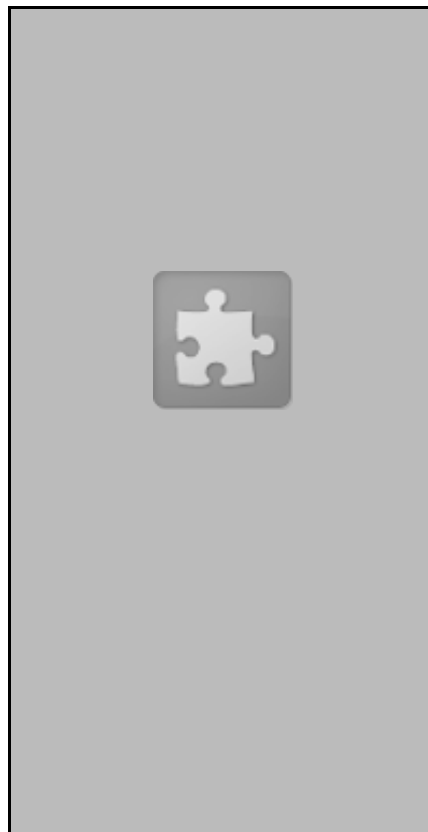
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