

THE VENUS PROJECT AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

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A Little Background

In April of 2014, I received an email from someone named Roxanne Meadows, co-founder of The Venus Project (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl7Yq8QbPns>), inviting me to be interviewed for a three-part documentary series that had been successfully funded through a Kickstarter campaign. The Venus Project is based on the ideas of the late engineer, futurist, and visionary, Jacque Fresco (<https://www.thevenusproject.com/fresco-engineer-philosopher-not-go-school/>). According to Meadows, in the documentary, which was eventually called *The Choice Is Ours*, science would be weaved throughout, including “the meaning of science and the introduction of science applied to the social system for a sustainable future.” I was invited as an expert on behavioral science because “the world depends on science and technology and the application of the behavioral sciences.”

It turns out that someone who was already involved in The Venus Project was an undergraduate student at the University of Kansas and took a course with Derek Reed. The student already knew about Skinner and behaviorism, and when asked for a recommendation for a behavior analyst who could be interviewed for the film, Derek suggested me.

Because I've spent much of my career as a behavior analyst trying to promote and disseminate behavior analysis, the invitation peaked my interest and I readily accepted. I was sent a list of questions, which I edited for accuracy and relevance, and then within a few weeks a member of the team came to my house in the hills of Burbank, California, with video equipment and interviewed me for a couple of hours.

In March of 2015 *The Choice is Ours* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb5ivvcTvRQ>) was released. As of this writing, it has been viewed almost 2 million times. Another Venus Project documentary, *Paradise or Oblivion*, has been viewed 2 and a half million times. In July of 2016, while I was in Melbourne, Florida, giving a series of CEU talks at Florida Institute of Technology, my family and I drove down to Venus, Florida—where The Venus Project gets its name—to visit Meadows and Fresco who was nearing 100 years old. The Venus Project includes a 21-acre “research center” created by Meadows and Fresco as an example of what the outskirts of a city of the future envisioned by Fresco might look like (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsXND5qQ-bc>).

In November of 2015, I was invited to be a keynote speaker at Jacque Fresco's 100th birthday celebration to be held in March 2016. My talk was “Can We Act to Save the World?” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkOMYPzy4Ho>), the title of which was taken from Skinner's article, “Why We Are Not Acting to Save The World.”

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In May 2017, Jacque Fresco died at the age of 101. He left behind a trove of articles, books, and videos describing the problems with modern society and explaining solutions based on what he calls a “resource-based economy.”

The Venus Project and Behavior Analysis

The Venus Project is the brainchild of Roxanne Meadows and the late Jacque Fresco. In short, Meadows and Fresco have noted all the problems resulting from current monetary systems (i.e., capitalism), including, income inequality, poverty, oppression, the waste and exhaustion of natural resources, and pollution, not to mention the sixth extinction, which is resulting from the above in combination with unchecked human population growth. Fresco and The Venus Project have suggested and promoted what is called a Resource-Based Economy (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIMy0QBSQWo>) in which “all goods and services are available to all people without the need for means of exchange such as money, credits, barter, or any other means. For this to be achieved all resources must be declared as the common heritage of all Earth’s inhabitants. Equipped with the latest scientific and technological marvels, mankind could reach extremely high productivity levels and create an abundance of resources.”

For the purposes of the present essay, The Venus Project acknowledges that, like other natural phenomena, human behavior is lawful, and along with technologies derived from the natural sciences, a behavioral technology derived from natural science will be necessary to achieve an efficient and just society and a resource-based economy. That is why they reached out to me. What I would like to do is to challenge other behavior analysts to become involved in The Venus Project and to lend their expertise in the science and application of a behavioral technology.

Changing the current trajectory of society to one consistent with the goals of The Venus Project is a long shot, but worth it to save ourselves and many other species. The Earth itself will weather the human storm just fine and will still be here in about 5 billion years when the sun becomes a red giant and vaporizes the solar system. By then humans will have been long gone. In the meantime, and for the remainder of human existence on the planet, we are not helpless. We can take advantage of our science and technology, including behavioral science, to try to make the world a better place for the creatures that inhabit it. The Venus Project, with the help of behavior analysts, isn’t a bad way to start.