

The Unbusinesslike Nature of Business

A five-weekend journey with Bayo Akomolafe

March 18–20 | May 27–29 | July 22–24 | September 9–11 | October 7–9, 2022

- Lectures, discussion, and sitting—with-impossible—questions
 - Two hours Fri/Sat/Sun respectively
 - In community, with special guests
 - Not a typical business course
 - An invitation to go deeper
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The series is open to the public and is for everyone who cares about using business to enable more beautiful lives. Participants can join live and will have access to the recordings.

Full-course pass (all five weekends):

€1,800 for general public

€1,500 for House Residents

50% discount for students, start-ups, and nonprofits



Whither business?

A murmur of fungal spores deposits a single one on the forest floor in its winding path to wherever. An ant wandering by, foraging for food, steps on the spore. Deep within the ant body, the introduced fungal cell multiplies, taking up space—unbeknownst to the hardworking critter. Soon enough, the ant starts to behave strangely: it stops its foraging, stops communing, and—quite beholden to fungal and fugitive imperatives beneath its hard exterior—leaves the ant colony, pushing away from the familiar. Eventually, the ant—steered and driven—would climb a nameless shoot, dig its mandibles into the underside of one of its leaves, and die.

But things are only beginning to get interesting: within a week, an alien stalk will explode through the ant's head, flowering into a new fungal station. A new cycle of sporulation begins. This biological account about zombie ants, the insect—entangled fungal pathogen. *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*, sporulation, and neuroparasitology might seem an odd way to introduce a pedagogy focused on business and leadership. The image of business we are used to casts Thomas Carlyle's "Great Man" (arguably the most resilient figure of the businessperson we know) as the primary agent of control, manipulation, predetermined outcomes, gilded intelligences, and panoramic vision. But that image of control and supremacy—heavily subsidized by invisibilized externalities—is composting, succumbing to the elements it disdained.

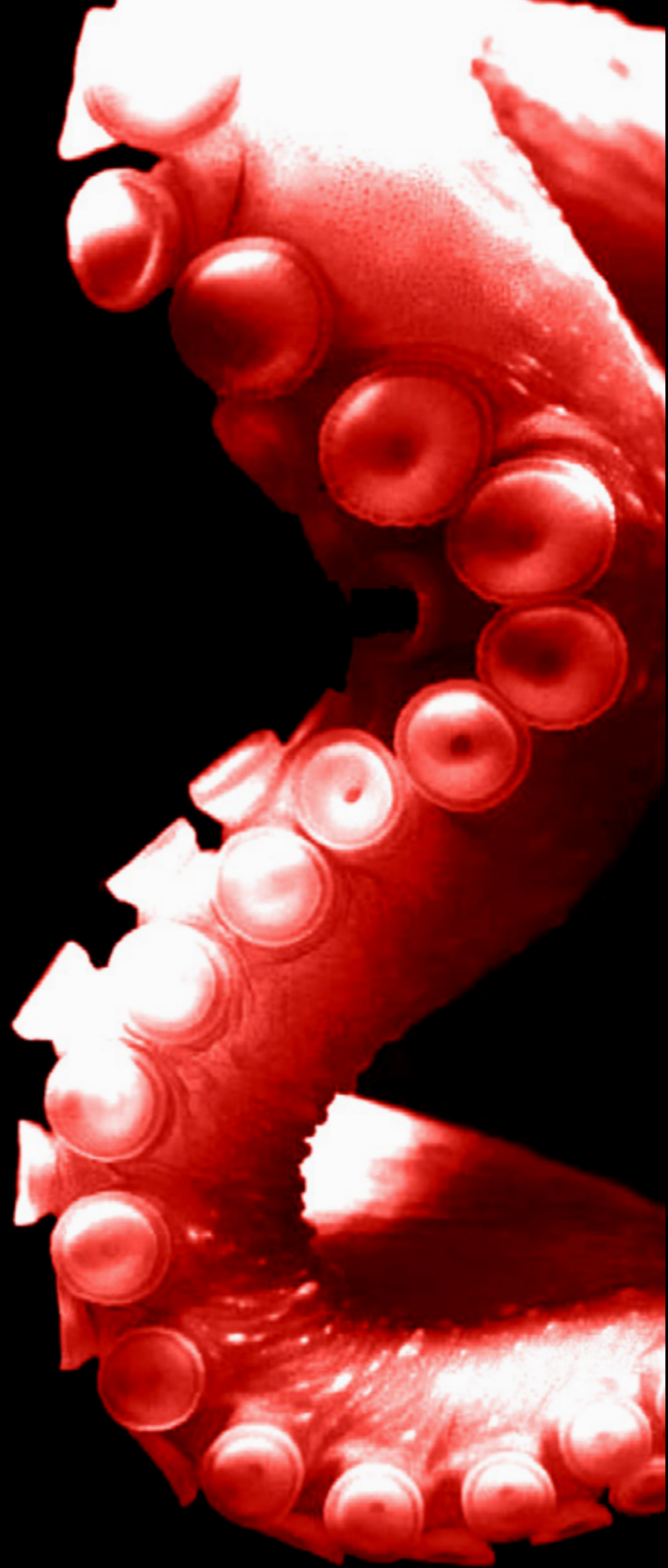


Welcome to the Anthropocene. The ironic “age of man” meant to mark the spot where the artifice of industrial imperatives and the terraforming project of endless expansionism outshot the fragility of the planet, meeting a material world that pushes back on human claims to centrality. To the extent that it mobilizes attention to the edges of exposure, the Anthropocene suggests that “we” humans are also moved, stirred, steered, moved, instigated, and swayed by ecological forces. We are not “Great;” we are embedded, rhizomatic, imbricated within networks of acting with/ in the world much in the same way “the human” may be traced within sedimented strata of geological material.

In this sense, business is now infected. Exposed. Business is already a doing philosophy, a doingtheory; a speculative, spiritual, ideological, place—making sociomaterial endeavour. No longer the prestigious activities quarantined in the sectoral politics of the nation—state, embalmed with market dynamics and accumulation, business must now meet an insurgency of extremes from an animist and animated periphery.

Like oriented zombie
ants led astray by
sporulated exposures,
the ontology of business
has shapeshifted in the
glimmer of a pandemic—
inflected Anthropocene.

It too must become
something alien,
something broken—
through, something
undone, something
monstrous.



What this journey is about (and not)

*This is not a business course.
Not in the sense we are used to.*

This journey is not about business getting “better,” expanding consciousness, constructing utopias, or accepting the inevitability of AI and the metaverse.

It is not about being better stewards of the planet or finding creative ways to articulate a more environment-sensitive CSR policy framework. It is about the unframeability and incomprehensibility of the uncertain and the crippling vitality of a world that extends beyond legibility. This journey suggests that even being “good” businesses might get in the way of transformative differences.

This journey is not about adopting new leadership structures: whether top-down hierarchical systems or more collectivized approaches. It is about the unprecedentedness of cracks, the places where leadership fails and where something else wants to sprout.

This is not a puritanical approach that treats philosophy as a disciplined object far removed from the mundanities of the market. Instead, it treats business as a form of ritual, a theological account, an inquiry that is already invested in asking concrete questions about what it means to live well, to eat well, to be human, to be otherwise, in a changing and challenging world.

This is not another critique of capitalism and its racializing technologies—even though critique is crucial.

This is not a call for justice. It is not a pathologization of profit or greed—an attempt to dismantle a world that no longer works for the many. Instead, this journey is a mycorrhizal appreciation of the complicated ways worlds world themselves, and how desire travels and migrates in its errant becomings.

Thinking of business as a form activism, this journey enlists recognizable organizational forms in the ongoing research of what new response—abilities might look like.



This is not a project in capacity—building. There are no success secrets here. Instead, this project is premised on failure, on the theory of postactivism and the ‘crack.’ It asks, what happens when what is traditionally recognized as business success becomes impervious to migratory dynamics and other such matters? As such, this is a journey in generative incapacitation, in the creativity and generosity that is only available when things go off—track, off—axis, off—line.

This is not some sort of assisted tourism into the metaphysical, a presentation of a readymade indigenous archive of solutions and sentiments that ‘Western’ businesses could pick off the shelf.

There is no through—line that runs from the mastery of the themes of this venture to ultimate success. Instead, this journey is inspired by the Inuit culture’s practices of qaartisiluni, a way of “sitting in the dark and waiting for something to happen”—a different cosmovision of agency and response—ability that brings us to the composting heat of humility.

This is not for you if you must move along, if things are going swimmingly well, if nothing haunts down the hallway, if the future feels certain.

This journey is for those who cannot afford forward continuity, whose crippled fingers cannot quite wrap themselves around the familiar levers of control and precision—and yet feel the pull of an entrepreneurial playfulness, an experimentation that wants to take risks, that is not satisfied with the reduction of politics to the management of safe spaces.

In short, this journey is about therianthropy. Becoming animal. Like Kafka’s gruesome bug that replaces the salesman when dawn breaks. Humility must mean more than an accumulation of information; it must mean we think and become—with the world in a way that might not be immediately discernible. This is about making sanctuary for the incomprehensible, about profit’s queer cousins and tentacular kin, about the promise of the fugitive when the plantation can no longer produce.

This is the unbusinesslike nature of business.

— *Dr. Bayo Akomolafe*

A soft pedagogy of the awkward

The weekend of engagements will be divided into Bayo's interactive lectures, a forum for playful inquiry led by a group of Bayo's friends called 'Abayomi.' The final day of the three will be dedicated to the Bakhita Project, a post-anthropocentric research platform that invites speculative fabulation and other forms of meeting the world outside of its rectilinear conveniences.

The Bakhita Project is an opportunity for participants and participant organizations to join the weekends as research hubs.

March 18–20: We Need a Break!

11:00–1:00 p.m. EST | 4:00–6:00 p.m. CET

The Great Resignation; the COVID–19 pandemic; cyborgian posthumanist flows; leadership; the imperial legacies of business; assemblage; climate chaos; the Anthropocene; failure as catalyst; what kinds of business leaders are needed today? Business as inquiry.

Friday: Lecture/Talk by Dr. Bayo Akomolafe

Saturday: Abayomi (Forum): Sitting with Impossible Questions

Sunday: The Bakhita Project: Research into the Unbusinesslike Nature of Business

May 27–29: The Threat of Solutions: When Sustainability Becomes Unsustainable

10:00–12:00 p.m. EST | 4:00–6:00 p.m. CET

Images; the familiar; reframing responsibility; postactivism; errant breakthroughs from circuitous flows; the uncertain; what might becoming accountable to a world that flows look like?

Friday: Lecture/Talk by Dr. Bayo Akomolafe + Conversation with Guest, Minna Salami

Saturday: Abayomi (Forum): Sitting with Impossible Questions

Sunday: The Bakhita Project: Research into the Unbusinesslike Nature of Business



July 22–24: The Anatomy of a Crack: Generative Incapacitation and the Gift of Failure

10:00–12:00 p.m. EST | 4:00–6:00 p.m. CET

Selah; ethnographies of the new; trauma. business as therapy. Slavoj's event; playing with failure; cartographies of loss; what do the collapses of these moments mean for business continuity? What ethical moves are possible in the face of this excess?

Friday: *Lecture/Talk by Dr. Bayo Akomolafe + Conversation with Guests, Charles Eisenstein and Nora Bateson*

Saturday: *Abayomi (Forum): Sitting with Impossible Questions*

Sunday: *The Bakhita Project: Research into the Unbusinesslike Nature of Business*

September 9–11: Making Sanctuary

10:00–12:00 p.m. EST | 4:00–6:00 p.m. CET

The Afrocene and the Anthropocene. Thinking the future. Business as mode of making care. Futures literacy. Making sanctuary as an invitation to the risk.

Friday: *Lecture/Talk by Dr. Bayo Akomolafe + Conversation with Guest, Dr. Riel Miller*

Saturday: *Abayomi (Forum): Sitting with Impossible Questions*

Sunday: *The Bakhita Project: Research into the Unbusinesslike Nature of Business*

October 7–9: Money and a Post–Capitalist World

10:00–12:00 p.m. EST | 4:00–6:00 p.m. CET

A discussion with Alnoor Ladha

Friday: *Lecture/Talk by Dr. Bayo Akomolafe + Conversation with Guest, Alnoor Ladha*

Saturday: *Abayomi (Forum): Sitting with Impossible Questions*

Sunday: *The Bakhita Project: Research into the Unbusinesslike Nature of Business*



Dr. Bayo Akomolafe

is a widely celebrated international speaker, teacher, public intellectual, and writer, and one of the most exciting voices of a new posthumanist and postactivist movement that examines the concerns of life beyond the human species and traditional notions of “agency.” His deep questions and concerns for decolonized landscapes have led him to explore the nuances of a “magical” world “too promiscuous to fit

neatly into our fondest notions of it.” His quest to “come down to Earth” and “slow down” serve as a stark provocation for a business world that in large part resembles the opposite of it.

In this series of inquiries, conversations, and experiences, Bayo will convene a shared inquiry into the many hearts of our extraordinarily challenging times as a way of mobilizing new philosophies and orientations for business that reconnect us more profoundly with the emerging nature of our be(com)ing.