

## The Price of PHILIP

AS WE ALL KNOW, Fruice is the connective tissue of Philipville. It is the economic imperative of planned obsolescence and a Just-In-Time economy taken to its logical extreme, where time-sensitive pricing and on-demand production create a terrifyingly efficient and all-too-believable fiscal reality.

**THEREFORE, THE PRICING OF PHILIP IS IMPORTANT.** Given the subject matter of the story, its production in the workshop and its not-quite-mass-paperback status, the price should not be arbitrary. In fact, the novel's price can be a signal, communicating expectations for its reception, commanding the reader's attention and focusing its reading. This first edition published by Project Press is somewhere between a pulp fiction (although in a very limited quantity) and an artwork (really the product of a sustained performance.) Rather than producing a typical exhibition as display and representation, the structure of PHILIP facilitated a science fiction writing workshop, creating a temporary zone of production. From 2–9 November 2006, Dublin was home to a graphic designer, a filmmaker, two visual artists, two critics and two curators who came together to collectively envision a future. Housed in the Project Art Centre bar, typing away at their laptops and scribbling plots, scenes and characters across the walls, the amateur novelists collectively wrote PHILIP. Because this particular exhibition format privileges production over display, then it makes sense to price the book based on the immaterial labor costs incurred during the workshop rather than the material, shipping, travel or distribution costs.

**THE POLITICAL ECONOMIES OF ADAM SMITH AND KARL MARX** studied the conditions under which production was organized in the nation-states of the new capitalist system in the 18th and 19th centuries (respectively.) Given the three factors of economic production — labor, land and capital — the discipline of Political Economy places a particular focus on labor, with its implicit political conflict between the desires of workers and those of employers. Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Adam Smith wrote the first modern economic text with his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* in 1776. In his magnum opus, Smith outlined the basic tenets of an industrial capitalist political economy and introduced concepts still resonant in pop economic theory today including *The Invisible Hand of the market* and *Both-Benefit transactions*. In 19th century Berlin, Paris and London, Karl Marx developed his well-known ideas on the organization of labor, building directly on the principles that Adam Smith described. However, Marx projected the (then) current industrial capitalist system to its likely conclusion. In *Marxian Economics* (as opposed to Marxist, which carries the requisite political-ideological framework and social restructuring), the goal is to provide insight and guidance for the cooperative production of human labor. Marxian economists lobby for the most effective organization of collective workers with as little management as possible. Management is viewed as a means of capitalizing on specialized knowledge or qualifications divorced from the actual value of its labor.

**MORE RECENTLY, IMMATERIAL LABOR WAS IDENTIFIED** and interrogated by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their political economic treatise *Empire* (2000). The authors built directly from Karl Marx's ideas to synthesize a possible escape from the gross misdistributions of wealth and power inherent in contemporary capitalism. In their book, *Immaterial Labor* is defined as "labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication." [p. 290] Further, they describe three kinds of immaterial labor in the contemporary post-industrial economy: 1. the informationalization of industrial production; 2. analytical and symbolic manipulation; and 3. the production of affect and relationships. Further, since *Immaterial Labor* is largely produced on and with a computer rather than requiring the task-specific machines and tools of the industrial economy, one kind of labor can be freely exchanged for another. The result is an abstraction of various kinds of labor into one meta-activity. Hardt and Negri propose that this rise of *Immaterial Labor* has replaced the assembly

line with the network. Cooperation among a committed group of workers, each with specific skills and connected by smooth communications yields a networked production without the exclusive requirements of capital or land. *Immaterial Labor* can be more fluidly organized by a wider group of producers more quickly and with less money in temporary zones — a short-lived network of production, individuals linked together in lines of communication, deterritorialization and cooperation (perhaps, a science fiction writing workshop.)

**SO THEN, THE PRICE OF PHILIP SHOULD EQUAL THE COSTS OF IMMATERIAL LABOR DISTRIBUTED OVER THE NUMBER OF COPIES.** This is the most direct way to work out the price, and it ends up at approximately a reasonable amount for the First Edition (€ 85.70). The *Immaterial Labor* costs for PHILIP include participant fees, organizing fees and participant per diems over the course of the eight day workshop. The material production costs — printing, production, shipping and distribution — are not included. A budget breakdown is included below.

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PARTICIPANTS		
8 @ € 400		€ 2400.00
ORGANIZATION		
2 @ € 1000.00		€ 2000.00
1 @ € 1500.00		€ 1500.00
PER DIEMS		
8 x 9 DAYS @ €30		€ 2670.00
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SUBTOTAL		€ 8570.00
NO. COPIES		/ 100 --
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EACH		€ 85.70
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**IF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF COPIES GOES UP, THEN THE PRICE PER COPY GOES DOWN.** Assuming that the *Immaterial Labor* costs of the workshop are fixed at € 8570.00, the first edition of 100 copies yields a per copy price of € 85.70. If 100 more copies are produced in a second edition to yield 200 total copies of PHILIP, the price of each will be € 8570.00 / 200 = € 42.85. Further, if a mass-market-sized print-run of 1500 additional copies is produced, the price will be € 8570.00 / 1700 = € 5.04. As the price of each edition is adjusted to account for the labor divided over the total number of copies, only the price of that edition is affected.

**THE RESULT IS A CURIOUS INVERSION OF THE ECONOMY OF SCALE** essential to supply-side capitalism. In an *Economy of Scale*, as more copies of an identical product are made, the manufacturing costs decrease and the per unit profit goes up. But in the case of PHILIP, as more copies are produced, the manufacturing costs increase and the per unit profit goes down. In its place, a demand-side *Economy of Scope* (also known by economists as *The Network Effect*) is produced. *The Network Effect* describes the increasing value of an individual product as more and more are sold — the most typical example is the telephone, pretty useless if there is only one but transformative if there are millions all linked together. As additional copies of PHILIP are produced, the *Immaterial Labor* of the workshop then is further dispersed over the additional copies — circulating and connecting places and people remote from its site of production, creating a network of readers and a sustainable economy in the process.

**FINALLY, PHILIP'S SECOND EDITION SHOULD BE PRODUCED ON-DEMAND.** A website and interface may be produced and staged at [www.philipville.com](http://www.philipville.com) to process orders for the novel. When an order is placed through this online interface, payment will be collected and a copy of the novel will be printed, bound and shipped by Lulu.com in an already established process. However, the price of a copy will always be re-adjusting — each time an order is placed, the total number of copies is increased and the resulting price is reduced.

**MAY I TAKE YOUR ORDER?**

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