I want to talk about academic freedom in today’s corporate university by taking a long detour, specifically to the fourth century BCE, and some distinctions to be found in the texts of Plato.¹ You may say that I’m removing the operations of the contemporary corporate university to a realm of rarefied abstraction, but I’m actually interested in doing so in the name of returning to those very nitty-gritty practices of the contemporary university—specifically, the economics of the tenure process and its relation to the somewhat amorphous category of “academic freedom.” Even if we are, in Frank Donoghue’s phrase, “the last professors” in the academy, maybe we still have something to learn from the first one, Plato.²

Let me be a bit clearer: it’s not so much that I’m interested in bringing Plato to the contemporary discourse of academic freedom, but I want to begin with Plato because there’s a kind of “Platonism” already circulating through this discourse. In short, academic freedom quite often functions as a kind of Platonic form, in the old-fashioned sense that Plato was taught to me as an undergraduate philosophy major: there are, so the story goes, these unchanging, immaterial forms somewhere in the heavens, and what we see here
on the fallen, material earth are mere imitations of those perfect images, from which we’re destined always to fall short, but they do somehow help to orient our search for the truth. Now, this is literally a sophomoric reading of Plato, the sort of thing a student could get a B for arguing in Philosophy 101, but I think it does have considerable resonance with the way that academic freedom functions in many discussions: academic freedom is that immaterial form of unbridled, autonomous truth, that more or less timeless thing that’s necessary to posit in order both to ground and to drive the continued project of (academic) thinking. The American Association of University Professors’ 1940 “Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure” defines academic freedom as “full freedom in research and in the publication of results,” though everyone presumably knew then, as they know now, that “freedom” is not the kind of thing that’s ever “full,” academically or otherwise. So, in the general discourse surrounding the term, academic freedom functions like the old-fashioned reading of Platonic eidos, not so much portrayed or understood as a thing that one might ever attain (or a protected set of practices that one could perform), but a regulative ideal, the general ethos of inquiry that Immanuel Kant summed up so nicely in his essay on the Enlightenment: “Dare to know.”

Concomitantly, at least in the reading that I’ve done on the history of academic freedom, the shall we say “earthly” component of the form is found in its consistent yoking to the question of tenure: when the words academic freedom get used in discussions of the university (as, for example, in the AAUP’s 1915, 1940, and 1970 statements on academic freedom), the word tenure is almost always lurking nearby, as the guiding principle of the process (academic freedom as that which regulates the tenure process from above, what the tenure process must evaluate in any given case—committees want finally to know, does this person have an “independent research agenda”); conversely, academic freedom functions as the outcome of the tenure process (the carrot that follows the stick: you earn unfettered or “full” academic freedom for surviving the apprenticeship or hazing ritual that is the tenure process). In short, academic freedom is the otherworldly form that guides and grounds this more mundane job contract called tenure—once you’ve secured tenure, you can really dare to know. And it’s implied, though never quite stated outright, that without the philosophical foundation and ethical burden imposed by the Platonic form of academic freedom, tenure would have no reason for being at all.

One might say that if academic freedom is the theory of the university pro-
fessoriate, then tenure is the practice. As such, both tenure and academic freedom are thought to be key to the workings of the academy, insofar as universities are not there simply to reproduce accepted dogma, but to produce new paths to knowledge. This is also, one might add in passing, why the theoretical discourse of academic freedom is, like its material friend tenure, almost always restricted to inquiry in a university setting: academic freedom is the idea that grounds the practice of university teaching, but not all teaching. For example, John Dewey’s cornerstone 1902 essay “Academic Freedom” opens by insisting on this very Platonic distinction between types of paideia: “In discussing the questions summed up in the phrase academic freedom, it is necessary to make a distinction between the university proper and those teaching bodies, called by whatever name, whose primary business is to inculcate a fixed set of ideas or facts.” So, the ideological reproduction of what Plato names doxa (what Dewey calls the training of “disciples”—e.g., the rote learning of the primary grades, teaching in religious orders, and vocational or business-oriented courses of study) is not to be confused with the rigors of producing knowledge (Plato’s episteme, what Dewey calls “discipline”). If, as Dewey argues, “the university function is the truth-function,” then academic freedom is the ubiquitous principle of all university teaching and learning, the grease that allows the wheels of the truth function to turn. Academic freedom, in that case, is maybe not so much something that guides the work of the academy from on high, but the everyday job of the academy itself. In Dewey’s words, “to investigate truth, critically to verify fact, to reach conclusions by the best methods at command, untrammeled by external fear or favor, to communicate this truth to the student, to interpret to him its bearing on the questions he will have to face in life—this is precisely the aim and object of the university.” And it’s also a pretty good description of the work of the Platonic dialogue, which is much more about the experimental positing and testing of knowledge than it is in pie-in-the-sky contemplation of absolutes.

In any case, the discourse of academic freedom has, for better or worse, largely been confined to the university. However, I think it’s important to note that, both inside and outside the university, academic freedom almost always comes up as a topic not in terms of the academic everyday (as in Dewey’s sense, or even Plato’s sense of dialogue, a practice), but within the discourse of betrayed ideals: in spectacular or highly intense, publicized cases in which someone is fired from the university. These are cases that we can now index quickly by names—Norman Finkelstein, Ward Chur-
chill, Barbara Foley—and I’m sure that each of us has a handful of names that index politically motivated tenure denials or dismissals from our own universities. Or we could fall back on shocking historical cases—recalling, for example, that Bertrand Russell was terminated in both England and the United States for nakedly political reasons, leading his son Conrad to write what is perhaps the classic defense of academic freedom. Interestingly, though, the high-flying rhetoric of academic freedom almost never comes up in the more mundane cases of tenure denial, which account for the vast majority of the faculty exodus from the tenure line. It’s easy enough to see the travesty against academic freedom in the Finkelstein tenure case, but what about the guy in the psych department who doesn’t do work that pulls in enough grants? Or the woman in political science who’s placing a lot of articles but not in the “top-tier” journals that her department has decided are the most important in the field? And what about the cultural anthropologist who comes up for tenure with two university press books on maquiladoras, only to find himself ethnically cleansed from a discipline that increasingly recognizes itself no longer as a liberal art but as a life science? Or what about the person, in whatever department, who’s just an asshole, doesn’t fit in or play well with others—not “collegial,” a “problem” with “fit” in the department?

For every high-profile case where we see the obvious, politically motivated betrayal of what we might call academic freedom’s Platonic form, there are literally hundreds of more mundane, everyday tenure denials that seem to have a very unclear relation to the ideal of “full academic freedom.” We instantly recognize a betrayal of academic freedom when someone is fired precisely because of the politically charged nature of what he or she works on, but we don’t recognize it at work when, in our prosaic committee work, we question the quality of a junior professor’s work on the Harlem Renaissance or regard someone’s research as “outside the mainstream,” of “low quality,” or not having any “impact” in our discipline. It’s easy enough to see academic freedom as the spectacular sunlight that bathes high-profile cases in a harsh, critical light for us, but what of academic freedom within the proceduralism of the every-year tenure process, in what Plato calls the work of dialectic—that process of sorting the like from like (separating the pretenders from the genuine article) and evaluating (separating the good from the bad)? In Plato’s Sophist, the Eleatic Stranger reminds us, in lingo that deans still conjure in their charges to promotion and tenure (P & T) committees, that “discrimination is cleansing” and such “cleansing has two
types”: “one kind [of discrimination] separates what’s worse from what’s better, and the other separates like from like.” Is the research before us, the philosophy of P & T asks, quality work on its own terms (is it better or worse)? Conversely, does it have an impact on its discipline (measured by its likeness—citation counts, grants, outside letters from experts in the field)?

In short, there are at least two Platos at work in the contemporary P & T process—one the transcendentalist Plato of the eternal forms (let’s call him the academic freedom Plato); the other is the “dialectical” Plato, the writer of dialogues, who’s working with a set of loose rules but largely without a net (let’s call him the “tenure” Plato, who sorts and evaluates types, according not to preexisting ideal form, but according to their likeness and difference).

So, to turn all this a bit more closely toward my stated topic, by the “economics” of academic freedom, I mean to explore the economies that connect academic freedom almost universally to the question of tenure. And by economics, I mean both the contemporary sense of the cost-benefit analysis, and additionally in the Greek sense, where economics finds its semantic roots literally in cleaning house—managing the affairs and boundaries of the home or oikos. (“Yes,” the department head says, “it’s good work, but is it really at home in applied linguistics?”) Also, and much more obliquely in the Greek, I want to think about tenure economics as a kind of thought that moves primarily on the terrain of similarity or likeness (in Greek, eikos). (“Yes, it’s great work; we know because it’s similar to the work we’ve published.”) What one might call oikos-nomics—cleaning house—is ultimately a kind of eikos-nomics, separation according to likeness, and by the phrase “economics of academic freedom,” I mean to suggest this dual movement of policing the boundaries of the disciplinary space (the home discipline, the oikos) through means of a kind of reasoning based on sorting by likeness (eikos).

I should note, however, that thinking according to likeness constitutes a type of knowledge that Plato has Socrates viciously attack as sophistry. As Socrates reminds us in Phaedrus, one can spot Sophists like Tisias or Gorgias precisely insofar as they insist “that what is likely [eikos] must be held in higher honor that what is true [aletheia].” Though, as we learn in Plato’s late dialogue Sophist, there may finally be no way to definitively separate the Sophist from the philosopher, the pretender from the genuine article, the tenurable candidate from the failed academic. For proof of this in Plato, one
need only recall what happens to the star of the dialogues, Socrates—condemned for the very sophistry he tried to root out of Athens.

Of course, we need to deal with still another kind of Platonism (in the bad sense of otherworldly, irrelevant) and the other, more mundane meaning of economics (show me the money!) that are both going to dog any contemporary discussion of either academic freedom or tenure. As we all know, and Frank Donoghue’s recent book *The Last Professors* argues quite persuasively and forcefully, the world where tenure and academic freedom made a difference—the North American tenure-track research university of the mid- to late twentieth century—is slowly fading into the academic rearview mirror, with around 65 percent of all university classes presently being taught by adjunct and part-time labor, for whom the guarantees of academic freedom, and even more so tenure, are even less tangible than “justice” in Plato’s *Republic*.

Though I suppose that if we all agreed wholesale with Donoghue’s assessment of the near future, we could have adjourned before we started down this path. (If you haven’t read it, I’ll unfairly reduce his supple analysis to a bumper sticker: “We’re screwed.”) So I’m going to suspend either judgment or disbelief, and act, perhaps in a Platonically ironic way, as if the past and present of academic freedom and tenure still mattered. In any case, let me just limn quickly the contours of my thesis: I want to argue that tenure is hardly an irrelevant or archaic practice for the future of the corporate university. Or more precisely, though tenure is an archaic practice of sorts, certainly out of step with other contemporary labor markets, it remains *economically* necessary (in all senses of the word, including the dismal science sense), both for the administration and for the faculty of what’s still called (following the Platonic metaphor) higher education. The twist I’d like to argue is that the *justification* for the tenure process, namely, academic freedom, needs to be rethought, maybe even abandoned.

Indeed, the general discourse that connects academic freedom to tenure tightens up before all the senses of *economics* I’m passing through here—the Platonic form of academic freedom, the tenure process as sorting according to quality and likeness, and the sheer monetary expense of academic freedom and/as tenure. Or, to put it more bluntly, it’s to keep tenure from sliding into seeming like a “mere” economic boondoggle that positing the amorphous category of academic freedom seems necessary. The economics of tenure as housecleaning or simple selection according to likeness, tenure without the portentous backing of academic freedom, seems like a kind of
in-group protection procedure, a blackballing nightmare, wherein if you’re nice to the grand pooh-bahs (your department head and the dean) and follow the lodge rules (suck up to some players in your discipline), you’ll surely get your fez. In this sense, tenure looks to the naked eye like the opposite of academic freedom’s “dare to know” (tenure looks more like academic conformity), and here a whole host of critiques of tenure, from the Right but also from the Left, find their common inspiration: tenure is elitist, classist, secretive, and arcane, not the pursuit of knowledge but sinecure protection. More like a priesthood than a profession, it discourages innovative work rather than fostering it. In the end, tenure’s just not fair, not open to enough people. And perhaps most dammingly, without academic freedom functioning as a ground, an outcome, or even a loss leader for faculty buy-in, tenure looks to many of its critics like an immense Ponzi scheme, with hundreds of graduate students and adjuncts paying in at the teaching bottom, so a small class of people can cash out on extravagant research perks at the top. “Sorry, I can’t come to the meeting—off to Cornell this weekend.”

Which leads to the third sense, where the more mundane and familiar meaning of economics (as the dismal pseudoscience of money) likewise causes people to want to fall back on the Platonic form of academic freedom: tenure is, simply put, too materially expensive a commodity to dole out if it’s not in the service of some very highly prized intangible good. In Robert Reich’s terms, tenured professors are highly specialized symbolic analysts, yeah, but “flexible” labor we’re not. The lifetime employment contract that academic tenure carries is absolutely without compare in any other labor market, and if tenure is not there to guarantee and assist the higher work of academic freedom, then (the argument goes) it’s an antiquated practice, which has to be sucked into the same market-take-all economy that rules over everything else these days. It’s undoubtedly cheaper to run a university on a series of contingent contracts than it is with lifetime faculty contacts; so if it’s not in the business of serving academic freedom anyway, tenure should be (or inevitably will be) kicked to the curb. Without the Platonic form of academic freedom to back it up, things look bad for our old friend tenure—which is, I presume, why the words so often travel in tandem.

However, in the spirit of academic freedom, I want to propose that we jettison the entire notion of academic freedom as the primary theoretical cover for tenure and examine—dare I say affirm?—tenure as a practice in its own right, as a business practice in a particular labor situation, the con-
temporary corporate university. As an opening salvo here, I’d point out that the discourse of academic freedom has already been jettisoned from the tenure process’s deliberations in practice. I brought academic freedom up recently in a college P & T meeting, during a discussion about a contentious case . . . and people just stared blankly at me. It wasn’t that they were horrified or taken aback, but just that they didn’t see what academic freedom had to do with the matter at hand, evaluating dossiers. It was as if I were talking about fine points of interpretation in a Frank O’Hara poem or the workings of Derridean *différance*—maybe these things would be interesting to consider in another context, but wholly irrelevant here in a P & T meeting. I sensed that shifting my tack to talking about Plato wasn’t going to help my argument either, but I guess my point is this: in my four previous years on that committee, I’d never heard the words *academic freedom* uttered, not even once.

OK, you say, maybe academic freedom is pie-in-the-sky stuff, but frankly so is the whole idea of saving tenure—it’s history, dead as the Pony Express, for inexorably market reasons. Every other market works with flexible or casual labor, so too inevitably will the top end of the academic labor market. The all-powerful but finally know-nothing administrators will grind the humanities tenure track under their penny-pinching heels, completely excising research from the arts and humanities equation, and forcing us all (or the next generation of us all) into the adjunct pool—high teaching loads, no research, no travel, no job security for anyone. That’s their vision of the university.

Well, a couple of things about that. As a labor market, university teaching and research are as unique as the singular practice of tenure that accrues to them. Tenure doesn’t so much work to control outflow (the amount of research produced, for example) as it does to control personnel intake—which is what people from both the Right and the Left don’t like about it. It’s mandarin, a scarification technique. But, and here’s the oddest thing about it from a strictly economic perspective, tenure is a process of scarification that doesn’t substantially raise the monetary value of the operation it regulates, university faculty teaching and research. Quite the opposite: hardball economically speaking, what one might call the deadwood tax (from the administration’s point of view, the bad side of tenure—the person who ekes out just enough to get tenure in six years, then falls largely fallow) is what administrators over the years have tacitly agreed to pay at the bottom of the faculty pool, precisely to keep from having to pay a lot more
at the top. And it’s proven pretty effective—where else can you get someone with twenty years of schooling who’s happy to start at $50,000? With the complete foreknowledge that he or she may be shown the door in six years for murky reasons? And even if you survive tenure, you will never make exponentially more than that? I’m sure a lot of us in this profession get paid pretty well, but what do the highest-paid academics in all the American humanities make—maybe a tiny handful make more than $200,000? You’re doing really great if you’re making $100,000, which is of course a lot of dough. Until you compare that to the highest-paid people in other professions that require an advanced degree and arcane training—lawyers, doctors, dentists. Lifetime job security is incredibly valuable, but it costs you in terms of your take-home pay: high-minded stuff about “daring to know” set aside, that’s the centerpiece of the economic cost-benefit surrounding tenure.\textsuperscript{14}

Indeed, much hard economics research—essays with lots of higher math in them—suggests that tenure doesn’t require grounding in some ultimate good. Tenure is, in the lingo economists prefer, “rational and maximizing” for the contemporary university—which is at least partially to say, it’s not as expensive as its abolition would likely be.\textsuperscript{15} Though that, I hasten to add, remains the case if and only if the present parameters of university administration—the academic prestige and fame game, driven by rankings—doesn’t change drastically. Tenure does keep unproductive stiffs secure in their jobs—no doubt about that. That’s what keeps people all lathered up about tenure and brings the scorn of defenders of academic freedom. Fine, but protecting the deadwood (or, for that matter, some belief in fostering the new) is not really the function that keeps tenure economically viable for the university. Rather, what keeps it economically alive is that the huge perk of tenure tends to break any sense of collective bargaining, and at the same time, tenure artificially and very efficiently deflates what it costs to get individuals at the “top” of the academic research market.

Of course, in the doomsday “last professors” scenarios, it could be that the whole game changes: maybe in the near future, no one in administration cares about age-old Platonic game excellence anymore, and the vast majority of academic institutions abandon the ranking mania that has taken over higher ed in recent years. If there’s no more prestige mongering, then there’s no more need for protecting the bona fides of prestige faculty. Maybe those days of excellence are over, though I seriously doubt it. Frankly, I can’t see what’s in it for administrators to lord over the sinking
of the American university system, which (despite the water cooler resentment that presides over your workplace and mine) remains the jewel of the global education industry. Anyone with an Internet connection and an ax to grind can complain all he or she wants about the elitist labor practices of the university, but you can’t argue with the success of the product, one of the few remaining global industries where we can all confidently stand up and say, “USA rules!” University administrators are brand managers, and who’s going to let the brand go to hell just to save money? Save money for whom, for chrissake? There are no stockholders to feed. Most universities, for better or worse, remain not-for-profit enterprises—as such, all they have to sell to customers is the quality of their brand. Most if not all of brand identity is tied up in the sense that there’s someone who’s there, over the long haul, policing and guaranteeing the quality of the educational product.

Or think of it this way: as universities start having to compete harder for a shrinking student dollar, the sign that reads, “Come on in—we guarantee there are no, or at least very few, tenured faculty here!” isn’t the magic that’s going to have them lining up for admission. Indeed, university education is already so incredibly expensive, it’s hard to believe that rational choice theory drives much of the academic market anyway. As a random example, think about this: it presently costs around $52,000 per year to attend Wake Forest University.16 Say, as a thought experiment, that Wake Forest clears out all its tenured faculty members and hires an army of adjuncts, allowing it to cut its tuition (presently more than $38,500) in half, allowing you to shave more than $19,000 off the total yearly bill. Here’s the real question: is anyone going to pay $33,000 per year for education based on that market model? I seriously doubt it. Sure as hell not the Wake Forest alums, who send their kids and dollars back in droves. And I’m sure not one of those students or alums can name any administrator who ever changed his or her life.

In short, as we jettison the Platonic eternal form of academic freedom as a kind of cover for what we do, I think conversely that we have to affirm, as a kind of structural necessity, what Plato might call the sophistry of tenure—its housecleaning and selection-by-similarity functions. Which is to say, I think it’s time we find some ways to affirm tenure’s nakedly political and economic functions, outside the sniping negativity that inevitably dogs the process if you discuss it in Platonic terms. Yes, tenure is often politically motivated by petty disciplinary squabbles, and it’s elitist (by definition—only a tiny slice of the population has the credential to get a foot in the door),
as well as being positively Masonic in the secrecy of its workings. But it’s precisely the mandarin complexity of the process, controlled almost wholly by faculty, that protects the intellectual bona fides of the operation, and the lifetime contract drives research in the most economically viable way.

Tenure is the last vestige of faculty sovereignty in the corporate university, which is partially why it’s so vicious, and while tenure is hardly perfect, it remains the linchpin of the entire American higher ed operation, and I think there’s as much in it for the administration as there is for the faculty. Will tenure-track positions ever again be 80 to 90 percent of the teaching faculty? That’s another discussion, but I would vehemently argue against the sense that tenure is somehow primarily responsible for the labor plight the contemporary university finds itself in—the bogus notion that the whole fiasco of contingent university labor was in fact engineered by tenured faculty to screw the part-timers or that the storm would be calmed if there were no tenured fat cats. The problem isn’t that some people have good tenure-track jobs; the problem is that a whole lot more people need good tenure-track jobs. But in any case, it’s not a zero-sum game, where one person’s tenure-track success adds up to the wholesale exploitation of others. These decisions have been made in the corporate university, and they can be made differently.

So, to conclude, just as the old-fashioned transcendentalist reading of Plato’s forms strikes me as unhelpful doxa at this point, so does too much dependence on the airy discourse of academic freedom to ground what we do: it’s both too easy to criticize and too difficult. And as a bulwark against administrative intrusion into the faculty-run tenure process, the discourse of academic freedom seems too contentless to be of much use. In the Barbara Foley case, for example, it was argued that she incited students to protest against, and dump red paint on, a Nicaraguan Contra leader in the 1980s at Northwestern University; in short, she was denied tenure precisely on the grounds of academic freedom—that she had denied said freedom to people she didn’t agree with. I believe similar things were said in the Finkelstein case, and David Horowitz, if anyone is listening, is likewise ranting on about how leftists have betrayed academic freedom—it’s right in the title of his so-called book, *Indoctrination U: The Left’s War against Academic Freedom.* And if our staunchest opponents are appealing to the very same category that the AAUP is appealing to in order to defend us, then one has to assume that the old-fashioned “Platonic form” of academic freedom has finally outlived its usefulness.
And of course much more could be said about this. Should one want to salvage the category of academic freedom, the necessities of academic freedom would have to be much different today than they were in, say, the AAUP’s 1940. Recall that Bertrand Russell was dismissed from his job teaching logic in New York in 1941 for intimating that sex outside marriage was not a big deal, nor was homosexuality. Whatever academic freedom is today, it certainly doesn’t need to be there to protect cutting-edge thought from the stifling normativity of the herd; that’s in fact what universities demand from faculty these days—new, new, new. (Got a book on the history of fisting as a sexual practice? No problem—as long as Harvard’s willing to publish it.) Academic freedom has been trumped as an ideological category by the contentless branding discourse of “excellence,” for better or worse.

Tenure, however, is not so easy to give up on, and not so much because I think it has an easy and predictable future—because maybe it does, maybe it doesn’t. But in the end, tenure makes a lot more “sense,” economically speaking, than anyone presently gives it credit for. This, of course, doesn’t make the problems and challenges of academic work in the present go away, but, hopefully in the spirit of a certain reading of Plato (recall that the dialogues never really come to any kind of satisfying conclusion), it does bring certain issues to the forefront and argue that others might be best left behind. It doesn’t necessarily give us a concrete way to respond to our critics (though ignoring them is a good strategy—one is tempted to point out that resentful jeremiads against privileged elites tend not to get all that much traction in American culture), but it does I think help us to think about what we do, if we focus more on thinking about the messy processes of tenure and lean less on the pristine ideology of academic freedom.

Response is an ongoing and experimental process—precisely what dialogues are good for. But they won’t give us easy answers. The only concrete response I extend to you is the one that I offer at holidays to people in my extended family, when they dredge up all the usual stuff about my working precious little for good coin: “You want a cushy job like this? It’s easy—go to school for twenty years; write a couple of hundred pages on some really arcane, but ‘hot,’ topic; publish a bunch of articles in peer-reviewed journals and a university press book or two; keep seventy-five overtaxed young adults interested in modern drama, epistolary novels, or existentialism three times a week; and hope for a series of massively implausible breaks. Yeah, it’s a breeze.” Just ask Socrates.
Notes

1 This essay is based on a lecture delivered at Cornell University’s Africana Research Cen-
ter, at a symposium for this volume organized by Grant Farred, in February 2009. In this
version, I will try to preserve the oral quality of the original, both to mark the specificity
and intensity of the occasion, and to honor as much as possible the absolute priority of
the spoken word in Plato’s work. See Plato, Phaedrus, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul

2 Frank Donoghue, The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities

3 American Association of University Professors, 1940 “Statement of Principles on Aca-
demic Freedom and Tenure, with 1970 Interpretive Comments,” www.aaup.org/AAUP/

11, 2009).

53–66, 53.

6 Ibid., 55.

7 Ibid.


9 For more on the function of “collegiality” in the tenure process, see the cluster of articles

226d–e.

11 Oikos is not etymologically related in any direct way to eikos (as, for example, eikos, the
similar or likely, is related to eikon, the copy or image), but I do think that the modern
sense of economics moves much more in the orbit of eikos (which some translators render
as “what is probable”) than it involves the domestic space of the home. For a brief over-
view of eikos in early Greek thinking, see A. A. Long, The Cambridge Companion to Early
Greek Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 296–303. For an excel-
lient, in-depth treatment of the word’s range of meanings in ancient Greece (all of which
come down to “likeness,” rather than the historically inaccurate modern sense of “prob-
ability”), see David C. Hoffman, “Concerning Eikos: Social Expectation and Verisimilitude

12 Plato, Phaedrus, 267a; see also 272d–e and 273c–e. As Hoffman writes, “If Plato’s treat-
ment of eikos is at odds with the way the term is actually used in Antiphon, Lysias and
Isocrates, it is in this way: While Plato says that the eikos is that which has a ‘likeness to
truth,’ the comparison invited by eikos is in fact usually between an account of events
and social expectations about how those events would typically unfold, not between the
account and an abstract notion of ‘the truth’ somehow divorced from social expectation.
Of course, this is a retrospective analysis: ‘social expectations’ (a.k.a. exdoxa) were rarely
rigorously distinguished from ‘the truth’ before Plato. . . . Judgments from eikos are
arrived at not by counting how often a particular event occurs, but rather by comparing a particular event with a generalized expectation.” Hoffman, “Concerning Eikos,” 23.


16 The 2009–10 cost to attend Wake Forest is $52,082, to be exact. See www.wfu.edu/finaid/costofattendence.html (accessed February 17, 2009).


18 At some level, it’s the inevitability of the “casualization” of academic labor that seems to me suspect in analyses like Donoghue’s Last Professors. One might point out, as I try to do in “Associate Vice Provost,” that the economic inevitability argument of recent years has likewise suggested that middle-management positions were doomed to extinction, but middle management in the corporate university has ballooned to nearly unbelievable numbers during those very same years—up well over 200 percent (while tenure-track faculty hiring is down around 20 percent). Cuts may be inevitable in the current economic climate, but teaching and research are, simply put, not the “fat” in higher education (they are in fact all there is), and you can hire five tenure-track history professors for what one assistant vice provost for academic excellence gets paid. This is the argument we need to take to the public, it seems to me.
