Outline Lecture Nine—Living the Examined Life: Socrates

I) Socrates: The Embodiment and Nemesis of a Democratic Polis
   a) 399 B.C.E. Trial of Socrates
      i) Reputation as an intellectual magnet in the symposium
      ii) Threatened the conservative and traditional establishment of Athens
   b) The Historical Setting Behind the Trial
      i) Post-Peloponnesian War Athens
         (1) Athens after disastrous Sicilian Expedition of 413 B.C.E.
            (a) Advocated and led by Alcibiades
            (b) Alcibiades’s relationship with Socrates
         (2) Unconditional surrender to Sparta in 404
            (a) Dictatorship under Spartan general—Lysander
            (b) “The Thirty”—group of oligarchs led by Critias in 404

II) The Proceedings of the Trial in 399 BCE
   a) The Portrait of Socrates in Plato’s “Apology”
      i) Credibility of Plato’s account?
      ii) The meaning of “Apologia” in Greek
      iii) “The unexamined life is not worth living”
   b) Trial as Podium
      i) Turning the tables on his accusers
      ii) Corrective or corrosive to the Athenian status quo?
   c) The State of Athenian Democracy
      i) Importance of the size of a polis
         (1) Small size instills in each citizen an ethos of civic duty and self-governing
         (2) A system without bureaucracy, red-tape, or deferral of power
      ii) Changing political landscape in the 5th century
         (1) Dominated by special interests, especially the mercantile factions
         (2) Less concern for To Koinon or the “greater good”
         (3) The Boulê—Council of 500 of men picked by ballot
         (4) Dangers of demagoguery

III) The Defense of Socrates
   a) His Defense for “Dabbling in Metaphysical Matters”
      i) Importance of knowing that one does not know
      ii) Presumptuousness of individuals
      iii) Implications for democracy
   b) His Defense against Corrupting the Youth
      i) Against personal interests
      ii) Yet appeal of Socrates’s iconoclasm
      iii) Is a teacher responsible for the conduct of his or her students?
   c) His Defense against Religious Impiety
      i) Respectful agnosticism
      ii) His personal “divine” experience
         (1) The meaning of “daemon”
IV) Socrates as the Manifestation of the Athenian Ideal
   a) His Insistence on his Duty as a Citizen
      i) Sense of duty as a soldier
      ii) Sense of duty as a philosopher
      iii) Accept the verdict with grace
      iv) The laws of the polis as his “parents”
         (1) Social contract with Athens
         (2) One should either persuade or obey
   b) Death as his Final Duty
      i) The final vote
      ii) Socrates in “Crito”
   c) Tragic Irony
      i) “A Hegelian tragedy, a conflict, in which both sides were right”