

## **How Democracies Die. A Colloquy. Ronald JP Lesko**

September 6, 13, 20,27, 2018

Primary Reading:

*How Democracies Die.*

by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt

Crown/Penguin Random House

2018

Articles To Be Announced

We need questions before “answers” to extend our understanding of the topic

Reflection/ Essay to follow.

### **September. 6, Thursday 2018**

Origin of politics, human nature and democracy

READ: *How Democracies Die* — Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION during session:

- What are your expectations in this Colloquy?
- How would you describe/characterize your political stance and beliefs?
- What is your personal background experience, life experience?
- Are there any political-cultural- religious absolutes?
- What is an absolute in thinking, law, doctrine, science?
- How ought we to think about the relationship of facts and truth?
- What is politics, it’s nature and purpose?
- What is your description of democracy?
- What is human nature? (Varieties of theories)
- What is the Origen of the belief in personal freedom?
- What is personal and political character?
- What is the American Political Culture , “character” and “virtue”?
- What is the American character and identity displayed in the experience of the individual vs community. Americans seemed to be defined by an irrepressible ongoing tension in two core values: Positive role for government and emphasis on human rights . (see E.J. Dionne Jr. .Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle For The American Ideal In An Age Of Discontent. Bloomsbury, 2012.)

—What is the ideal and paradigm of the Good Life? (Greeks, Judaea-Christian-justice, moral perfection and justice, Eastern cultures etc.

What is liberalism?

### **September 13 Thursday 2018**

American Political Character and Nature of Democracy

Read: *How Democracies Die*—Chapters 3, 4, 5

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What is democracy?

What is political culture? In America?

What is civility?

What is ideology?

Are we what we believe?

Is America divided?

If so, how?

Is democracy a civil religion?

### **September 20, Thursday 2018**

American Politics, “Rules”,

Read: *How Democracies Die* —Chapters 6, 7

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Is the America public a collection of marionettes?

Is Trump dismembering the American moral code?

Is Trump destroying the instruments and institutions of the American moral code?

Has the concept of the ‘common good’ lost meaning?

Are civility, fundamental universal political principles, equality of humans threatened with extinction. (See 1984 Orwell).

Why do facts and truth not seem to matter?

Does the analogy with sports adequately do justice to American politics and the dignity of human nature and individuals?

Is politics in America presented as entertainment?

What do people really know and understand about American politics and history?

Why treat all people’s opinions equally, including all government figures.

What are the “guard rails” of democracy and the ‘sacredness’ of a human being?

What is the source and 'origin' of Evil in human nature ?

(Alan Wolfe. Political Evil. Knopf, 2011)

What are some theories of human nature ?

**September 27 Thursday, 2018**

American Democracy Saved or Lost, Authoritarian Culture and elites, Government and of Capitalist Monopolies.

Read: *How Democracies Die*—Chapters 8,9

Questions:

Can American democracy survive under unbridled capitalism?

Is the "free market" a metaphor for political "phools"?

Is the current trend of government policies since November 2016 the entry into moral and political chaos?

What is freedom?

Reprive of selected questions above