

Hic Jacet Humptus - with a bow to the late William Buckley

April 4, 2010

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses
And all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again

How much can a citizen expect of his state?

Before we rush into the breach with solutions that only create more problems, solutions like more welfare, more job-retraining programs, more touchy-feely therapy, in short, more middle class boondoggling in a mind-boggling bureaucracy, let us try to find out what caused the problem.

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall" presupposes one of three possible conditions:

(1) He sat on the wall of his own volition. The market was open without interference, and he chose to sit on the wall.

(2) An act of God or nature placed him on the wall.

(3) He was set on the wall by one of his friends — liberal do-gooders, perhaps, or maybe radicals who want to create such bad conditions that *mirabile dictu* things will improve.

If #1, Humpty must look to his own resources for respite. If the government did not misrepresent the wall or weaken its pinnings, he cannot look to the government.

If #2, he must look to God for relief. One prays before a wall, not on a wall. (Even Parsees put only their dead on the wall.)

If #3, we may be dealing with violations of conspiracy laws. For the sake of argument, let us assume that all the king's horses and all the king's men could indeed rehabilitate Humpty. As Burke said, "And having looked to government for bread, on the very first scarcity they will turn and bite the hand that fed them." Humpty may well be a beginning, not an end, a recrudescence of something basic in man's nether nature. After Humpty what? I need not remind you that there are billions of eggs and many, many walls. Do we continue increasing the number of horses and men? Can we?

However, let us not fall (!) into the *post hoc, propter hoc* notion that Humpty's sitting on the wall caused his fall. It just might be part of *la condition humaine*, human destiny. Death may be squatting inside Humpty's shell, even as he was in the armor of Rilke's knight. Joyce warned us, in *Finnegans Wake*, that this might be our cycle. The liberals are not going to repeal the law of gravity, try though they may.

A problem arises: what if Humpty falls on us? That must, at all costs, be prevented. Citizens have the right to expect their government to protect them from this kind of interference. ALL THE KING'S HORSES AND ALL THE KING'S MEN WILL KEEP HUMPTY OFF THE WALL. In the next issue of

National Review I shall take up the threat of those righteous barbarians of the Left who began with littering and — all too predictably — ended with murder: Hansel and Gretel.