

PLAYING (WITH) THE NUMBERS: VARIATIONS ON A DUMÉZILIAN THEME

DEAN A. MILLER

The Dumézilian Tripartite/Trifunctional Theory

THE ‘invention’ of that symbolic projection found in the Indo-European (IE) traditions, with its tripartite or trifunctional outline, is customarily—or canonically—assigned to Georges Dumézil (1898–1986), though Dumézil’s colleague Émile Benveniste was investigating along much the same lines at about the same time, in the 1930s (see, for example, Benveniste 1932). Very briefly, Dumézil, drawing on a Durkheimian suggestion (if not a strictly Durkheimian model), found evidence that archaic IE-speaking societies were likely to conform their social, as well as their religious and many other structural aspects of the society, so as to reveal three *fonctions* or categorical ‘slots’, and that in doing so these societies almost certainly retraced a proto-Indo-European (PIE) master-pattern. Translated from the French, the three are usually given as the Sovereign or First Function (F1), the Second (Warrior or Guardian) Function (F2), and a Third Function compounded of the socially ‘nourishing’ areas of health, wealth, increase, and sexuality (F3) (see Littleton 1982: 58–93). Such was the core of the IE *idéologie*, meaning in this case a strong inclination toward tripartition, almost a habit of mind, apparent especially in the oldest extant IE data—and thought to be intentional and purposive, and not any sort of accidental ‘tic’ or automatic, meaningless response.

Over fifty years of an extremely active career, Dumézil explored, expanded, and modified this theme, finding more data congruent to his theory, as well as lo-

cating cultures and societies that, although indubitably IE in linguistic root and affiliation, resisted any easy application of the trifunctional schema: the ancient Greek (and the continental Gallic/Celtic) were seemingly resistant to a total inclusion in his theory so far as social divisions and religion were concerned, while Roman, Scandinavian, Irish Celtic, Perso-Indic, and other IE-speaking traditions fell into line rather more easily, though hard battles were fought over particular entries in the trifunctional ledger. But ‘Dumézilian trifunctionalism’, whether accepted or not, became almost a theoretical cliché. In this short paper I want to examine some important numerical (if not numerological) variations on the base theme, as well as looking at the persistence of the old tripartite theme or design itself under certain conditions and in certain areal traditions, identified both in space and in time.

Earlier and Later Reactions

One reaction to the Dumézilian formulation, apparent very early, was what might politely be called disbelief or at least agnosticism. It was argued either that (a) tripartite phenomena did *not* in fact mark the ancient IE traditions, or had no significant place in them, or (b) that all societies (especially archaic societies), speaking from within every sort of broad linguistic family, frequently and casually displayed tripartite divisions and categories. Thus it was argued early on (for example, by John Brough) that Judaeo-Christian scriptural sources (the Old Testament in particular) seemed to show clear ‘trifunctional’ traces (Brough 1959; see Littleton 1982: 198–200). More recently a Dutch scholar, Jarich Oosten (1985), taking another line of argument, has declared that there are plenty of important IE-based schematic formulations, even in ancient Greece, but that Dumézil’s tripartitism explains little of this IE base (Oosten posits a series of ‘familial’ or kin-group phenomena generating IE mythic themes, problems, and solutions). Throughout, and as a kind of minor *Kulturkampf*, a group of mainly German scholars and their epigones have set themselves up as what Coutau-Bégarie calls ‘scientific anti-Dumézilians’ (1998: 200), beginning with Paul Thieme and E. A. Philipsson, and continuing to Bernfried Schlerath and Schlerath’s student Stefan Zimmer (see, for example, Schlerath 1995–6). This group—in consonance with (a) above—simply denies the validity of the trifunctional phenomenon *tout entière*. Here, with some qualification, is where I would put Wouter Belier, whose 1991 book concentrates on details of the Dumézilian ‘idéologie tripartie’. In my opinion Belier is obsessed with the undoubted fact that Dumézil changed his mind from time to time; and I might add that, according to N. J. Allen, Belier’s obsessive probing of trifunctionality is significantly vitiated by the fact that he has misread, by excessively limiting, the meaning of ‘function’ in the Dumézilian sense, taking the concept to mean only ‘activity’ (Allen 1993: 121–2).

As to those who follow Dumézil and the trifunctional model ‘scientifically’, I note not only figures such as Dumézil’s student, Bernard Sergent, but also the outbreak of civil war between himself and another student of Dumézil’s, Daniel Dubuisson. This scholar has decried the excessive ‘congealing’ or ‘mummifying’ of the Dumézilian system he has laid at Sergent’s door, implicitly including the latter’s strict interpretation of what reflects the trifunctional theory and reality (Dubuisson 1996). Joël Grisward (see 1981) has explored and explicated a number of trifunctional patterns, especially in Western medieval sources. Some others, although originally open to the attractions of Dumézilian theory, now feel that that theory may overemphasize or overplay the trifunctional line. Jaan Puhvel, a long-time collaborator with and friend of Dumézil’s, has stated that, in his latter-day opinion, his old friend should best be remembered *not* for the tripartite theory, but for the fact that he ‘freed comparative mythology from the tyranny of etymology’ (Puhvel 1996: 153). Edgar Polomé, another old colleague and the editor of the *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, has said that Dumézil’s findings (in terms of trifunctionality) may refer only to very early IE patterns (personal communication). Even Dumézil himself, at the very end of his long life, raised doubts about the lasting validity of his theoretical construct, doubts which probably sprang from his highly developed sense of irony, but which still pleased—and fuelled the more or less principled objections of—those others who tried to break down and contradict the whole system he had described and explored (but for Dumézil’s continued interest in the trifunctional, see below).

Some Modifications

Dumézil never erected a unitary, marmoreal structure and then demanded that it be worshipped or sacrificed to (though he did insist that it ought to be properly understood). I myself thought that it might be possible to follow the hint he provided in his theorized bifurcation of two of his Functions. F1 he divided into the Mitraic or ‘near’, ‘light’, and ‘ordered’ sovereign aspect and the Varunaic or ‘far’, ‘dark’, and ‘mysterious’ aspect. F2, he suggested, might be split into the socially and anti-social manifestations or exemplifications of the ‘guardian’ Function, imaged respectively as the Þórr warrior in the Old Norse sources and the Óðinn warrior in the same context (Dumézil 1948/88: 19–29; see also Miller 1991, and especially Polomé 1990). I therefore experimentally inserted an interstitial entry (or entity) between the ‘Right Hand’ and the ‘Left Hand’ extremes in each of the three Functions, thus trisecting the original tripartite organization.¹ My attempt was soon

¹ See Miller 1992. I assigned, not entirely arbitrarily, a Functional ‘marker’ to each Function: F1 marked with Time, F2 with Act, F3 with Space. The problematic Third Function remains the most difficult to deal with in Dumézilian terms.

given a further complex turn by William Sayers, who designed a three-dimensional diagram, a globular figure cut horizontally into three unequal segments (for the visualized Functions, with F3 taken as the largest and F1 as proportionately the smallest). With each segment then quadrated, the quadrants were read as Nature opposed to Culture (for my Left and Right bifurcation), and Mediated activity opposed to Unmediated activity (Sayers 1993). Sayers—who had once worked on tripartism as it provided a ‘narrative tool’ in dealing with certain Irish and Icelandic contexts (1990)—now, with his quadripartate structure, added a sort of Lévi-Straussian colouration, approaching the four divisions (or activities) posited in the theory advanced by N. J. Allen, whose ideas I will detail shortly.

Emily Lyle has offered her own rendition and rearrangement of the Dumézilian scheme, expressing an ‘expansive’ view basically claiming that the presence of trifunctional (or certainly triplex) phenomena in cultures beyond the IE does not in fact invalidate Dumézil’s theory, but expands its usefulness (e.g. Lyle 1996: 103). However, her reading and penetration of the archaic materials (IE and non-IE) has led her to a type of quadripartite formulation in which three approximately Functional representations, all male, are accompanied and brought into a final unity by a dominant *female* potency (Lyle 1990: 11–25). This part of her theory has been supported—and specifically in important segments of the IE linguistic-cultural camp—by the investigations of a Swedish scholar, Britt-Mari Näsström (1995), who found that the Norse goddess Freya/Friggja had an omnifunctional association or projection (as she was the wife of the chief god, a battle goddess, *and* a goddess emblematic and protective of fertility and sexuality), and that this pattern was not at all uncommon elsewhere in the fund of archaic IE materials.² While maintaining this possibility, Lyle has also advanced the thesis that the Feminine (which I have capitalized to show the abstraction) may be perceived not as a fourth entity strictly speaking, but as the ‘rope’ or whole formed by the three strands of the Functions. Again, this is not necessarily, in her thinking, a conceptualization limited only to the archaic IE thought-world (Lyle 1996: 102–3).

Before moving on to other expansions of the original tripartite suggestion, I ought to refer to Kim McCone’s variation on a Dumézilian theory. This Irish scholar lays out a triplex diagram identifying material, social, and moral categories or slots (generally, F3, F2, F1), but in this reading the Warrior Function is made a ‘rank’ in society; in other words, the aspect of ‘warrior violence’ (the negative, anti-social aspect) is subtracted from the original pattern (McCone 1990: 130).

² Dumézil himself, sketching the pagan pantheon of the Kafirs (an isolated, IE-speaking people of the Hindu Kush, Islamized only in 1898), notes that it seems to consist of ‘quatre masculins, un féminin’ divinities, and that the female, the goddess Dizane, was in fact ‘trivalente’ (1994: 221–2).

Allen's Fourth Function

N. J. Allen began his construction of an additional Function, to be added to the original three, by noting that a quaternary rather than ternary organizational principle was more likely to emerge as an imaginal pattern in archaic (traditional) societies. He also underscored the fact that Dumézil himself had experimented with a fourth category or division (in his predictive IE formulation) as describing better, for example, caste data in India (Allen 1985, 1987). Allen sets up his Fourth Function as 'relational', that is, as pertaining to what, in the IE material located, is 'other, beyond or outside' the three Functional slots (Allen 1987: 28). The new Function resonates especially in respect to IE kingship or 'sovereignty'. Thus Allen proceeded to exhume and examine the mythistorical career of Romulus, finding that the Founder of Rome not only operated in or commanded all three Functions, but also moved beyond or outside them, being seen as, in one sense, supernumerary, deploying overarching, exceptional powers that can be identified either as constructive (F4+) or destructive (F4-) (Allen 1996, with diagram on p. 27). Now, in any discussion of royal authority, the 'mythic' posture and salience of the Founding King will almost always be drawn in extraordinary, unbounded, even semi-divine or divinized terms. I have suggested that such a figure as Constantine the Great, founder of East Rome and of his own city, is wrapped in a cloak of legendary *Stoff* that, when closely analyzed, replicates the characteristics of Romulus as Founding King.³ Allen also suggests that his theory would remove kingship *in esse* from the limits imposed by a strict Dumézilian reading of F1 'sovereignty' (Allen 1996: 33). In more recent work, he has used his F4 instrument to lever a heroic figure like Arjuna out of the usual framework given (in Dumézilian terms) for the great Indic epic, the *Mahābhārata*: Arjuna had been accepted as one of the Warrior-figures—F2 actors—of the epic's central Pandavas, but Allen sees him rather as F4, modelled after Indra, named as 'King of the Gods' (Allen 1999: 407–10, 412–13).

Lyle has raised at least a definitional cavil in respect to Allen's idea of a Fourth IE Function, observing that the looser, 'relational' aspect of this new Function might remove it from the other, or earlier, 'operational' aspect of the three Functions as strictly defined (and she sees no utility in completely abandoning triads for tetrads in the IE context; 1996: 102). At this point I might also insert my own reading of the ultimate meaning and nature of IE 'sovereignty' and the tensions running within it, for, in reaction to the pressure from the sacral-priestly aspect of the First Function, certain theories of kingship (I instance the East Roman-Byzantine and provisionally some Western medieval royalities) devised or

³ See Miller, forthcoming. The principal source for these legends is Gilbert Dagron's *Constantinople imaginaire* (1984). The chief (and symmetrically presented) difference between the cases of Romulus and Constantine is that the former indicates a mythic figure situated in 'history', the second a historical figure removed or translated into myth or quasi-myth.

attempted to devise a distinct *imperial* mode of supreme governance. By asserting the emperor's absolute primacy over all we would call the Functions—and, moreover, by eliminating hierarchy as such—any rival, priestly claim to sovereignty (by definition signifying the top of a hierarchy) was reduced to a side issue. This idea is often expressed in legal terms: in medieval France, the king was seen as an emperor in his own kingdom, especially as he had 'the authority to interpret divine law' (Swanson 1991: 280–9), and the same was seen when Henry VIII removed his realm from any form of legal subordination to Rome, declaring that it had always been an 'empire'.⁴ In its most thoroughly articulated form (the East Roman-Byzantine), this imperial power is neither divisible nor sovereign: it is singular, monolithic, and, in theory, eternal. It is possible, of course, that this 'imperial' concept is subsumable within the Fourth Function rubric as a sort of supreme vision of the Fourth Function. But, so far as I can see, the concept arises from the old IE division or tension between sacred and secular (or, loosely, Varunaic and Mitraic) power which Allen would like to remove or ignore, and it probably springs from the royal desire to establish one primary line or connection to the divine, one that the ruler, king or emperor, monopolized or controlled.

The Persistence of Trifunctionality

The Functional tripartism devised (or at least recognized) by Dumézil is a highly seductive construct: at one point, I (and two other scholars) were cited by no less a figure than Jaan Puhvel for 'foisting the Nessos-shirt of "the sins of the Warrior"', first on to certain cited warrior figures, mainly Greek, and then on to an innocent and unwary scholarly public (Miller 1977; Puhvel 1982: 26). Locating these Three Sins (of F1 king, or of F2 warrior) in fact remains as one of this system's salient temptations, not least because it seems to make sense of certain acts and patterns of act frequently found in the archaic IE material. Specifically it shows, in respect of kingship, how total or 'perfect' royal power ('perfect' kingship being a frequently encountered mytho-political theme in the traditional sources) can be limited and ended and succession arranged for, and in respect of the Warrior Function, how a powerful and fractious entity—perhaps very dangerous to society—could be reduced and finally brought to heel.⁵ Another tripartite phenomenon surfaced in a Scandinavian source, the *Rigsþula*, where the three sons of the god Heimdallr are given as Jarl ('noble'), Karl ('peasant'), and Þraell ('slave'), which seems to show a social division without a First Function king or priest. In fact this social division seems to have removed a category from the upper end of the canonical sequence

⁴ Cross 1991: 437: 'the King from henceforth would rule England as a new Constantine.'

⁵ In the ancient Irish context the 'prohibitions' called *gessa*, set against both king and warrior, served as limitations: violation ended life or occupation of office.

and added a category at the other, lower end. Dumézil (1958) found the missing First Function figure concealed in the myth in the person of the 'son of Jarl', the 'magician-king', Konr-ungr. Thus the original IE social formation would have been quadripartite (like the Indic) *if* the Þraell or slave had not been completely excluded from the social system, as he usually was. In any event, the idea that in the north a tripartite social system prevailed, shaped along the lines of this model, is now firmly established (see Pearson 1973: 155).⁶

I have no intention of setting out every area of trifunctionally ordered or directed investigation, but I should point to the persistent scholarly interest in identifying IE Functional 'colour coding', continuing from 1942, when de Vries laid out the symbolic trio 'Rood, wit, zwart'. White and red are usually and firmly (if symbolically) attached to the first two Functions. The F3 colouration is more problematic: Grisward (1983–4) has identified and explicated the meanings of the 'trois arbres' in the Graal legend ('l'arbre blanc, vert, rouge'), while Lyle has rung the changes on the colour symbolism involved in the (Roman and East Roman) circus factions and in some other IE contexts first looked over by Dumézil (1990: 8–9, especially 35–47, 'The Circus as Cosmos'). With Lyle (as with Allen, whom she cites), the triplex colour code soon moves toward a quadriplex formula, for the Third Function splits into two moieties or sub-sets represented or symbolized possibly by yellow and black, possibly by green and blue (*ibid.*: 8–13). With a recent article by Claude Sterckx (1997) we move back to tripartism: Sterckx's Three Kings are 'blanc, rouge, et bleu'. Sterckx makes the valuable observation that the colour of the Third Function is often simply read as a reversal of the 'noble' Second: it is 'non-rouge', connoting 'en fait l'impur et le sale' (*ibid.*: 839). This author also underscores the importance of the IE colour code itself, for he notes that the Vedic and Avestan words for 'social class' (*varna* and *pistra* respectively) literally mean 'colour' (*ibid.*). In leaving the subject, I ought to remark that, to no one's surprise, the authenticity of the entire IE 'tricolore' phenomenon is observed with a jaundiced and disbelieving eye by scholars such as Zimmer (see below).

With Sterckx's view of the Three Kings we can recover firmer tripartite ground, and elsewhere it is clear that a trifunctional set is very often made part of the descriptive and eulogistic vocabulary attached, most particularly, to kingship. When it is demanded, What is a King?, the response would likely be that he is one who is (simultaneously) *wise*, *brave*, and *generous*, thus commanding—operating effectively in—each of the three Functions. Slightly eccentrically, one Celtic tradition (investigated by Dumézil himself) defined the king in negative terms, that is, he should be *without* 'jealousy, fear, or avarice' (Dumézil 1973: 91–2). Elsewhere, as in Ptolemaic Egypt, with its Macedonian dynasty, we find piety substituted for

⁶ The Germanic area generally remains problematic in respect to these three 'classes', though the Anglo-Saxon evidence for a tripartite social structure seems quite clear: see, for example, Pelteret 1995: 29 ff.

wisdom, but the First function loading or valence is clear enough.⁷ The list goes on. In Carolingian Frankland the 'honorific designation of kingship' was read as compounding *virtus, magnanimitas, audacitas* (Peters 1970: 66). A peculiar variation on this eulogistic model can be seen in the same context in the epitaph for Boso, briefly King of Provence, which states: 'Hic pius et largus fuit, audax, ore facundus' (*MGH Poetae*, IV: 1027–8). Both Charles the Bald and his brother Lothar, coevals of Boso, were also given this fourth special talent (see Nelson 1992: 11, citing Nithard, *Historiarum Libri IV* III.6). The fourth inscribed excellence, referring to the king's ability to speak well, raises some fascinating questions and possibilities of its own, first because the mouth can be taken (as in the Indic context) as the specific seat of the F1 power (Allen 1999: 410), and secondly because, in another traditional IE context, the king's voice is said to resonate in three modes: the voice of *justice*, the voice of *command*, and the voice of *healing*—three modifying nouns with rather clear trifunctional significances (Bryant 1992: 143; for other powers and aspects of 'royal speech', see Miller 1999).

In fact it is not difficult to run up quite a sizeable catalogue of trifunctionally resonant descriptions of what a good king should be and do in sources ranging from William of Tyre to William Shakespeare, as well as a concise trifunctional description, taken from Thomas Aquinas, of how a *bad* king will act. The Angelic Doctor defines him as 'enthralled' by cupidity and dominated by anger, and in addition he hinders his subjects' spiritual good (*De Regno* III. 26; the pattern of negative charges ascends from F3 to F1). Another French medieval source, a fourteenth-century address to Charles VI made by Gauzelin de Bosquet, seems to 'clericalize' the excellences that supposedly mark the true king: he should show 'good intent, humility, purity of heart' (Swanson 1991: 283). What seems to activate these descriptions within archaic or traditional IE contexts? I would, if tentatively, suggest three generative possibilities: the formulaic, the ceremonial/ritual, and the dramatic.

(a) *Formulaic* instances of tripartite description might be interpreted as showing a declension and enfeebling of meaning. These instances would be close to the 'tic' which some anti-Dumézilians see as essentially similar to or resembling all the other cultural situations where a triplex response is called forth as a sort of catch-all, or as a banal expression of approximate completion or totality ('morning, noon, and night', '*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*', or for that matter 'Tom, Dick, and Harry'). There are, however, enough significant variations on the original IE triadic formula to show that here we have a cluster of ideas, not merely an automatic and unthinking response. For example, when the king is located in association with, or over, the Second (Warrior) Function, he may be granted the gaze of Vic-

⁷ See Dunand 1981: 23; according to Diodorus Siculus XI. 26. 6, in sixth-century BC Syracuse, the tyrant Gelon was applauded by his people as 'benefactor, saviour and king', which parses as a trifunctional set if *basileus* (king) is taken in this case—for in ancient Greece the meaning shifts—as an F2 or 'military' occupation.

tory (that is, as a result of his martial excellences, in leadership or by example; see Dumézil on the runic Sparlöse Stone). Or he may ‘formulaically’ be called brave or courageous, but also *audax*, ‘daring’, which signals a more active quality—and these qualities lead to or are involved in, not the result of, action. The essentially F1 operative quality of *wisdom* seems to show the king working in one sub-area of the Function and the adduction of *piety* another. Piety involves the proper, public, overt connection made to the divine. Wisdom is what we might call a private or personal—and perhaps ‘cumulative’—royal mental excellence,⁸ while the *just* king has a different, legal or legalistic resonance. Even royal involvement in the often ambiguous and even somewhat suspect F3 area of wealth and increase (an area possessing other, even more derogated qualities) can show some variation. *Generosity* describes a king valued for his distributive inclination—like the Germanic–Scandinavian royal ‘Ring-Giver’, for example. However, wishing (or making a charm to ensure) that the king be granted ‘good harvests’ (as in the runic inscription on that same Sparlöse Stone) involves him in the potent area where he may control, or be held responsible for, successful generation and life-giving fertility in the society he leads.

(b) The *ceremonial/ritual* aspects of trifunctionality (and I am using them as more or less the same active and connective phenomenon here) may first involve an examination of the instruments and marks of royalty, that is, *regalia* properly speaking. Dumézil himself had investigated the Royal Signs of the Scythian kings as given in Herodotus (4.5–6), that is, golden cup, axe, and ploughshare (Dumézil 1968: 449–52; read as F1, F2, F3 in that order; the cup refers to the Drink of Sovereignty, another complexly organized topic or type in the IE area). This is a large and only partially researched or understood area, but I can at the very least add the Old Irish evidence given in *Cath Meige Mucrama*, that the royal ‘signs’ of King Airt mac Cond were his sword and golden ring, ‘and his festive attire’.⁹ For a very clear intervention of trifunctionality in royal ceremonial, I can cite the extraordinary (and rather late) example of the Entry Ceremony produced by the city of London for the delectation of the young king Henry VI (in 1426): the themes of the ceremony were to be the royal characteristics of ‘peace, plenty and happiness’ (‘happiness’—*plaisaunce*—I read as an F1 mental set or valence). The three allegorical figures who presented themselves to the king were identified as Nature (signifying strength and fierceness), Grace (science and cunning), and Fortune

⁸ Grisward, in his close examination of the *Cycle des Narbonnais*, discerns the personifications of F1 sovereignty in that source as being three of the Sons of Aymeri. The eldest, Bernard, is ‘wise, pacific, reasonable’ (Grisward 1981: 175–7). His ‘partner’ is Beuves, who is also ‘wise’ but who slides toward the bellicose (*ibid.*: 178–9), while the named *king* is the youngest, and smallest, brother, Guibert, who seems to hold sacral (Varunaic?) power (*ibid.*: 180).

⁹ In the ‘Scéla Éogain’ or ‘Story of Eogan and Cormac’ (66–7, §9). The golden ring is taken as an F1 sign.

(prosperity and riches). Again, these can be interpreted without difficulty as F2, F1, and F3 (cited in Bryant 1994: 19–22, quoting John Lydgate).¹⁰

(c) The *dramatic* trigger of a tripartite sign may best be seen in the following scenario, and to no particular surprise the Second Function (dramatic almost by definition) is involved. In the great Old Irish source, the *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, the non-pareil warrior Cú Chulainn is seized in his terrific Warp Spasm (*TBC* 61, 201; ll. 2262 ff.). As part of his monstrous transfiguration his hair springs out from his head, ‘dark at the roots, then red, then tipped with gold’. I cited this triplex colouration as significant in Mallory and Adams (1997: 253), and my reading was criticized by Zimmer (1999: 124) as ‘a void speculation in the style of Dumézil’s epigones. There are so many “tricolores” all over the world’. The last statement is, of course, true, but Zimmer has, I believe, quite missed the point. Cú is referred to elsewhere in the *TBC* as ‘the dark-haired lad’, in the same way that his ordinary physical stature is given as slight, boyish or adolescent. When his warrior’s fury overtakes him and the wildly dramatic Warp Spasm occurs, Cú springs up to a tremendous height, and his hair is made to take on the tricolouration that signals a special injection, or projection, of the fiercest energy and power (as if the Warrior Function had here expanded beyond its set limits to dominate all the Functions).

Dumézil himself continued to explore the possibilities inherent in the tripartite divisions he had discovered up to—and in fact, one may say, beyond—the end of his life. Thus in his posthumously published *Le roman des jumeaux. Esquisses de mythologie* (Dumézil 1994) there is a section on ‘Trifunctionalia’, revealing not only that he had continued to explore such themes as ‘the three sins of the warrior’ (here the sins of the Tarquins, father and son, as recorded in Roman mythistory: *ibid.*: 271–7), but also that he was still probing the complexities of the three Functions as they were worked out in various places in Herodotus, specifically in the latter’s description of the Thracian pantheon (‘Notes sur la théologie des Thraces’, *ibid.*: 231–6). In the latter essay he displays the flexible curiosity which is the hallmark of his style of thought and research, noting (and here Allen might find evidence for his interpretation of the separated valences of kingship, since ‘Hermes’ is given as the specific Thracian *royal* god, guarantor of royal oaths) that the generality of Thracians seem to honour only three gods, trifunctionally ordered, of whom the last mentioned is feminine (Artemis, equivalent to Thracian Bendis, an F3 divinity).¹¹

¹⁰ The Paris Entry (Henry being briefly accepted as king of both realms) presented certain *institutions* of the city as, arguably, functional representations: the University (Wisdom), the Parlement (Justice, the Sword) and the Hôtel de Ville (Prosperity: all in Bryant 1994: 24). Nick Allen reminds me that putting an F2 label on the Parlement of Paris may be forcing or distorting the evidence somewhat (personal communication).

¹¹ See also Dumézil 1994: 278ff., for ‘Les trois fonctions: entre l’homme et la femme’.

Concluding Remarks

I admit to the rather nostalgic attraction of the fact that, in a new world of informational hypernumeration and gigabytes of proliferated data, I have been concerned here with divisions of merely two, three, or four. To sum up, as it now stands the 'numerical' situation in terms of IE patterns seems to be as follows. The triadic IE Functional structure—a big element in the *idéologie* originally posited by Dumézil—is still alive and well. It seems to emerge most strongly and persistently in descriptions of how IE *kingship* is constituted. Thus in its early medieval formulation—to give one more example—it is clearly visible in Alfred the Great's *Commentary on Boethius*, stating that a king must be supported by, and should himself support, *gebedmen*, *fyrðmen*, *weorcmen*, or those who pray, those who fight, and those who work (Batany 1963: 934; repeated, naturally, in DUBY 1980: 99–103). Of course, more or less pure tripartism need not be limited to the area of the royal, as we see—if anecdotally—in the *Poema del Cid*, where El Cid Campeador demands three things: his swords, his daughters' dowries, and justice for the wrongs done his daughters by the repulsive Infantes de Carrión.¹²

Withal, questions have to be raised in two areas: first, on a possible expansion of the triadic Functional structure while still staying within an IE frame, and secondly (certainly a related problem) on the possibilities for variability and flexibility *within* the Functions themselves. On the first point, Allen believes that kingship, at least, ought to be reconstructed to conform to his 'relational' F4 theory (and Lyle [1996: 104] makes the sensible point that Dumézil, who certainly saw the operation of the king in all three Functions, really ought to have revised his F1 theory accordingly). I have suggested that a developed 'imperial' theory also sets the ruler in a separate category, freed both from any 'sacral' specialization that might intervene in or claim sovereignty, and in fact from the limitations posed by sovereignty and hierarchy itself (for the East Roman/Byzantine construction of both theory and praxis, see Nicol 1991). On the matter of variability within the Functions, we have already seen that even in the old (if I may use the term) or original Dumézilian formula, the First Function was quickly bifurcated into the Mitraic and Varuniac entities (or operations), while within the archaic IE tradition *dual* kingship—not necessarily related at all to the Mitraic–Varunaic types—was seen, in pure or variously modified and differentiated forms, in ancient Sparta, the Germanic tribal area, and elsewhere (see Miller 1998). The putative solidity of the Second (Warrior) Function is also ephemeral: not only do we have the Óðinn Warrior/Pórr Warrior bifurcation, but (as displayed in various epic contexts) we also see the pairing or balancing of a warrior type with another, for instance, a 'pure' or chivalric warrior placed with a specialist in brute force—as Arjuna and Bhima—or the 'pure' fighter paired with a trickster or magic-worker, witness Diomedes and

¹² V. 137. The demand is in fact addressed to the king, but in the event 'justice' is achieved in a trial by combat in which the Infantes are routed.

Odysseos, or Bedwyr and Cei in the old Welsh tales (see Miller 1985, 1989).¹³ These latter F2 pairings differ from the primary Dumézilian Mitraic–Varunaic division because, in their more or less co-operative relationship, the ‘pairs’ are meant to further the action and effectiveness of the Function, which is not at all clear in the F1 Mitraic–Varunaic division, a division seemingly dominated by difference and rivalry.¹⁴ There is a temptation, I think, to regard the Second Function as the core and pivot of the whole Functional idea and structure, yet this Function can show itself divisible, or be redefined (as McCone did) to make it simply a sign—a ‘function’—of society itself.

Finally, the Third Function remains, as always, a difficult Function to deal with, containing as it does variable and ambiguously perceived goods and potencies (sexual passion and its dangers, as well as legitimate generation and necessary fertility, the deep and dark powers of the earth, wealth and its anti-social temptations, and so on). How, additionally, will we deal within the IE societal rubric with the ‘mystery of the merchant’, a figure mobile, manipulative, providing but not making anything—save, he hopes, a profit (see Miller 1992: 16, diagram on p. 17)? This Third Function, often signed as it is by the mysterious Twins, seems rather poorly integrated into an IE system that has often been tempted to snub, suspect, or derogate it (as we have seen in the colour coding as explained by Sterckx, above).

The previous pages may be felt to display a situation still caught up in a primitive arithmetical count, with no advance into mathematics, to say nothing of a more complex world of calculation. The investigation, however, is ongoing, and one has hopes. Clearly, the nature and number of these Functions is still a moot point and unclear. Allen, I think with cause, says that Belier’s notion of what a Function is—simply an ‘operation’ or activity—is much too limited; Allen’s own Fourth Function may be too broadly defined, or may serve merely as a better way of viewing the complexities of the F1 category, a sort of $F1a-(x)$. What we do seem to see, in the ongoing scholarship springing from Georges Dumézil’s original set of IE scenarios and his *idéologie*, are two counterposed efforts. One, notable in Allen’s F4 expansion and in the latest work of Lyle, is directed toward the extension of the original triad. The other appears as a sort of process of distillation, where a tripartite core is discovered in a larger group of individuals—the five Pandavas, for example, or the ‘sept fils de Aymeri’, whose essential tripartism was decoded by Grisward. In either case the *arche* was undoubtedly provided by the

¹³ See also Michael York’s essay (1988) on the ‘inherent duality’ apparent in the ancient Greek and Roman sources.

¹⁴ These F2 pairings seem closer in modality to the ‘dual-kingship’ type just described. I ought also to admit that Allen has provisionally removed Arjuna from the Second Function and therefore out of his partnership with the club-wielding Bhima.

French theorist, and we can positively state that the Dumézilian system remains important, directive, and powerfully creative.

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