

GIFT AS A SYMBOL OF INTERHUMAN RELATIONS

ANNA ZAMBRZYCKA-KUNACHOWICZ

Uniwersytet Jagiellonski
Katedra Etnografii Słowian
ul. Gródzka 52
P - 31 - 044 KRAKÓW

UDK 395. 83

Izvorni znanstveni rad
Original scientific paper
Primljeno 20. 06. 1990.

The paper in details show how an ethnological act, an act of gift-giving, can and must be put in a theoretical and methodical context. Without it, it is difficult to find the meaning of any ethnological occurrence. The author explains the conception of a gift as an universal cultural category through which higher values are realised. In communication between two persons, which have a positive attitude towards each other, meeting has an important role. The situation in which occasional gift-giving is obliged, the author calls gift-situation and puts it within a cultural system. Gift-giving and the gift givers, together with the kind of gift that is given, the intention of giving and the ritual of giving a gift, are connected with time and place and the typical gestures while the gift is given. It is obvious that the act of gift-giving has a symbolic function which is complex and of various meaning.

Undertaking considerations on the notion of gift and its meaning range I must state that I consider it a category of culture. The terms *categories of culture* are used here - after A. Guriewicz - as such notions which, with regard to their meaning, belong to basic, universal ones and associated with one another permit people to perceive reality and build an image of the world. Using the formulations by Guriewicz it should be added that these elementary categories are, in a sense, precursors of the idea and philosophy of life with regard to their universal character obligatory to whole communities. Their universal character results from the fact that they are appropriate to man at each stage of his history, though, the content they convey can undergo transformation. They also form the basic semantic *inventory* of culture¹.

The proposition of treating the notion *dar* gift as a category is connected with the assumption that its essence can be understood only when treated as an element of symbolic culture. Hence, to understand man, his position in the world and his relation to it considerations on the essence of *gift* must be undertaken since situations in which it appears speak about the man who lives in a world of determined values and makes choice among them².

1. A. Guriewicz, *Kategorie kultury sredniowiecznej*. Warszawa 1976. p. 17-21.

2. J. Tischner, *Myslenie wedlug wartosci*, Krakow 1981 Spoleczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak.

Having presented the attitude to the meaning of the notion *gift* let us determine closer its semantic and anthropological value.

At first I should like to quote the definitions of the word *dar* gift found in dictionaries of Polish language. These were formed on the basis of their contextual position in which this word occurred and occurs in opinion-sentences.

The word *dar* gift has been known in Polish language for a long time now. F. Slawski gives its meaning encountered in the XIVth c.: *that what is given to somebody, ability*³. In a dictionary of Polish language of the XVIth c. this word was defined in a comprehensive way as: 1. a present, gift, taken, offering; endowment, donation, sometimes ransom, tribute: a. gifts offered to people, a customary bestowal, a prize given to winners, a present which is to gain favour, b. oblation to God or gods, offerings to the church and priests; 2. values given to people by supernatural forces, fate or nature, immaterial or material goods, benefits, favours, a. abilities, talent, intellectual and spiritual qualities.

In its adverbial form *dar* gift means: free of charge, for nothing, without any reward, in form of gift, and *za dar* - free of charge easily, without any effort⁴.

Such a meaning of the word *dar* gift which has survived till the XXth c. is confirmed in modern dictionaries (Linde, Doroszewski, Karłowicz, Krynski, Niedzwiedzki, and Skorupka)⁵.

The definition of the word *darzyć* to bestow, given in dictionaries, is very important from the point of view of semantics. According to F. Slawski it originates from the substantive *dar* gift and is understood as bestowing, offering as a gift, while *darzyć sie* (with a reflexive pronoun) means be successful⁶. On the other hand, M. S. B. Linde associates the word *darzyć* to bestow with prosperity and friendliness *darzyć komu* (with dative of sb.) - to bestow to sb. - meant to be friendly to sb., wish luck, bestow further on, to do favour. *Darzyć sie* (with a reflexive pronoun) means to be successful, doing well, be lucky⁷. In the dictionary of Polish dialects this word is understood as equivalent of to have good luck, be successful⁸. In the phraseological dictionary of Polish language the word *darzyć* occurs in the sense of lavishing favours on sb., having consideration for sb., being friendly to sb. (have friendly feelings to sb., treat sb. in a friendly way), bestowing, affection (love, like sb.), to have confidence in sb. (to treat sb. with confidence)⁹.

3. F. Slawski, Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego, Krakow 1953, No 2, p. 137.

4. Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku, red. S. Bak, S. Hrabiec, W. Kuraszkiewicz, M. Mayenowa, S. Rospond, S. Sasaki, W. Taszycki, J. Woronczak, Wrocław-Warszawa-Krakow 1969, Vol. 4, p. 493.

5. M. S. B. Linde, Słownik języka polskiego, Lwow 1854 Vol. 1, p. 411-412; Słownik języka polskiego ed. W. Doroszewski, Warszawa 1960, Vol. 2, p. 23-24; J. Karłowicz; A. Krynski; W. Niedzwiedzki, Słownik języka polskiego, Poznan 1952, p. 165; S. Skorupka, Słownik frazeologiczny języka polskiego, Warszawa 1974, p. 165.

6. F. Slawski, op. cit., p. 138.

7. M. S. B. Linde, op. cit., p. 415.

8. J. Karłowicz, Słownik gwar polskich, Krakow 1900 Vol. 1, p. 312-313.

9. S. Skorupka, op. cit., p. 166.

As it has already been said the words *podarek*, *podarunek*, *podarze*, *upominek*, *prezent* have a synonymous meaning. Whereas, its verbal form *podarować*, *podarzyć*, *darować* bears the meaning of giving something free, without reward, as a gift. As a metaphor it was used in the sense of forgiving, to pardon, to remit¹⁰.

It is worth noticing that in the Kashubian dialect there exists a word *darnik* used to define a generous, well disposed, munificent person¹¹.

The above mentioned meanings of the word *dar* and of synonymous or semantically associated with its verbal forms give evidence that they are axiologically oriented signs and remain in a certain relation to various kinds and types of values. These values can be determined by contextual analysis of situations in which the gift appears in Polish literature, hence, by examining the intra-textual meaning structure. Quotations from literature given in dictionaries of Polish language permit to forward the statement that the notion of gift has an axiological character, hence, an ethical one since it bears a moral notion. A gift is a symbol of a certain harmonious coexistence based upon friendship, mutual friendliness, gratitude, and unselfish generosity¹². Rejection of a gift is a sign of rejecting the contact in this particular situation.

A gift is a reward for such attitudes as readiness to forgive, showing charity, mercy and good will, or simply provokes them.

Properties such as endurance, bravery, courage, and fulfilling duties (especially with respect to the native country) are highly estimated in Polish tradition. These attitudes have always been socially accepted and rewarded. The gift functions here as a symbol of special favour and appreciation. Lavishing favour is an approved behaviour and moral duty. Handing in a gift was the one of the signs of friendly feelings towards a person, a guest.

There are many descriptions of situations in which handing in a gift - a symbol of the donor's intentions, served to establish contacts based upon a peaceful coexistence. Establishing such a kind of interhuman relations is a generally desirable state.

Opinions on this subject found in literature are limited to interhuman contacts. A gift mediates also in the relations between man and the sacrum. A gift-sacrifice is a symbol of coexistence of these two orders and expresses man's attitude to sacral reality. Offering something a man constitutes, in certain conditions, some bonds with the sacrum. The sacrum is a value which can be experienced, among others, by the act of sacrifice. Basing upon formulations found in literature it may be considered that the bonds with sacrum are expressed not only by offering gifts but are also revealed in the conviction that human qualities, generally highly estimated, originate in God, are His gifts. These are e. g.: justice, charity, kindness, moderation, wisdom, modesty, ability to gain friendliness.

10. M. S. B. Linde, op. cit., Vol. 4: 1858, p. 206; Słownik języka polskiego ed. W. Doroszewski, Warszawa 1964, Vol. 6, p. 601; J. Karłowicz op. cit., p. 165.

11. B. Sychta, Słownik gwar kaszubskich na the kultury ludowej, Vol. 7, suplement, Wrocław 1976, p. 13.

12. In article Notion of gift and its range meaning in Polish. I have given proper quotations which were taken from publications published since XVI c, till now and I have considered proverbs concerning gift. Poland at the 12th Congress... Wrocław 1988; M. Svirac, Razmišljanja o daru i poklonu, Ethnoantropološki problemi, sv. 3, Beograd 1988, s. 30-35.

Moreover the literature of the XVIth c. conveys also the belief of those times that the power of healing, provoking pious tears, preaching ability as well as conquering the devil was also treated as a God's gift.

Moreover, the word *dar* gift has been used since the XIVth c. to determine the fact of possessing a talent, special ability for something, a quality. This refers to highly appreciated qualities which indicate that the man was specially well treated by God, nature, fate, and fortune. Possession of positive qualities or talents such as: painting ability, talent for literature, music, poetry is considered an endowment that not everyone is given.

The above formulations found in dictionaries and conclusions forwarded from textual analysis show evidently that the notion structure of the word *dar* gift is of symbolic character. This consists in the fact that the direct literary meaning of the notion conveys an indirect sense. I will try to formulate it as follows: comprehensive understanding of the sense of gift can be only achieved by recognizing the given contextual situation in which the gift occurs and relation in which it remains to the approved values.

Hence, the sense of *dar* gift is to be sought for analysis of various situations in which it occurs and in which it reveals its symbolic meaning.

One should also indicate to the meaning of a gift for interhuman relations both those in which man meets a man as well as other forms of social coexistence.

Speaking about man meeting a man I do not mean coexistence or existence side by side. From the phenomenological point of view a meeting differs from other forms of interhuman contacts in the fact that due to it or in it some higher values are realized.

A meeting may take place between individuals; and when can a man be spoken about as an individual? J. Bukowski answers this question: *To be an individual is to be with respect to other individuals and values.*¹³ A man is being oriented to a certain complex of values which constitute a specific axiological horizon of human life.

These values are hierarchically differentiated. According to A. Wegrzecki's formulation it may be said that during a meeting a particular *affinity* of the other man is revealed. He proves, thus, to live in a very similar if not identical axiological horizon, to accept certain values which he gives a similar hierarchy. He evaluates similar values in a similar way and realizes them. The axiological platform of meeting is characterized by homogeneity conducive to consolidation.¹⁴ As a matter of fact a certain difference in axiological moments may be revealed in a meeting but it need not mean adversity expressed in divergence in attitudes, point of view, and evaluation.

For meeting to take place between man and man mutual knowledge and understanding at simultaneous self-knowledge is necessary. Hence, this event permits to understand who you are and who the other person is, what he really lives for, and what he aims at.

It also worth mentioning - of course in a very short form - what gives the meeting its proper character. It is mutual, emotional, nondiscussive, direct opening of two people

13. J. Bukowski, *Zarys filozofii spotkania*, Krakow 1987, p. 11.

14. A. Wegrzecki, *O poznaniu drugiego czlowieka*, Krakow 1982. Papers of Academy of Economics in Krakow, Special series. Monography No 51, p. 158.

who feel certain bonds. Mutuality is understood as a certain partnership in reciprocal influence of these people who due to this meeting enrich themselves. This does not mean, however, that they must be necessarily equal or similar in any way, apart from experiencing the event of meeting.

A meeting goes together with unanimity taking place between the participants of the meeting. It is determined as openness connected with a feeling of bonds, a necessary condition of being side by side. The other man is as openly and suggestively felt as one feels oneself. Confidence in the other man, mutual openness gives the meeting a character and conditions its occurrence.

Emotionally creates the climate of the meeting; when deprived of it one may speak only about making acquaintance and not about a meeting in which values connected with the emotional experience are to be realized. These may be such values as: love, friendship, friendliness, or kindness. The above mentioned nondiscussiveness is understood as impossibility of a full transfer of contents of the meeting to other people but also impossibility of expressing in words the experienced bonds - that what is most essential. This lack of words is often expressed by saying: *Don't say anything, I can understand you, I know what you mean.*¹⁵

The philosophical direction in which the reflection on the phenomenon of meeting is discussed made me reflect that the event - meeting is of exceptional value for man giving him a chance of being an individual. Difficulty in expressing the value of this experience, the need of being in touch with another individual - not always realizable or verbally expressed - prompt people to offer a gift and it becomes a symbolic act of bestowing a part of oneself.¹⁶ Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska understands the idea of gift just in this way when considering the problem of man in her *Country community*. Very symptomatic is her description of taking leave with an inhabitant of a village - Zaborow - with whom she experienced a meeting: *I got with her very familiar and friendly. Her motherly care helped me a lot to survive the hard moments of hopelessness which every field research worker will experience. On my part I tried to encourage auntie in her critical days when her husband finally returned. The day of my departure was approaching. Auntie grew sad repeating now and again how lonely she will feel. One day she brought me a beautiful Cracow kerchief - Don't reject it - she said - I can't give you my heart, take this at least as a remembrance of me.*¹⁷

Mutual bestowing by partners of meeting need not occur only in critical situations as departure. Expressing the feeling of unity, wish to make the gift speak, if words cannot, are situations encountered in every day life when no symbolic feature is attributed to the gift.

15. J. Bukowski, op. cit., p. 143-168.

16. G. van der Leeuw expressed the essence of *gift* as follows: *Gift* means to establish a relation with another person, so to participate in it by means of some objects, which strictly are not *objects* but part of one's *ego* of a man. *To give* it means to transfer a part of one's own personality to another person's existence so that a permanent bond is created. *Fenomenologia religii*, Warszawa 1979, p. 399.

17. K. Zawistowicz-Adamska, *Spolecznosc wiejska*, Lodz 1948, p. 82.

Apart from intersubjective relations occurring at a meeting, man is also a social creature living in a community. He lives in situations of necessity but as well need of coexistence and keeping up bonds with other people. Reciprocal bestowing is one of the ways of expressing the relation with the social surrounding, based upon communication. In other words it may be said that a gift is a sign of people entering into a dialogue. As it has already been said its symbolic meaning can be determined and its sense understood by contextual descriptions of situations. Determination of symbolic forms, which the *situations of gift* are, permits interpretation of the symbolic language proper to a determined culture and consequently achievement of a common structure of various kinds of expressions *carrying* the sense.¹⁸

I will try to formulate a proposition establishing what phenomena constitute the *situation of gift*. Its symbolic meaning can be understood by determination of mutual relations in which they occur within the whole system which I called *situation*. The event at which the gift is offered is of primary importance. What gives it such a quality which inclines to bestowal? In Polish culture there are situations exceptional with regard to their uniqueness as e. g. return after a long absence, meeting a person whom one has not seen for a long time, threats as e. g. an illness, or *turning point* situations in the life of an individual or community (birth of a child, wedding, funeral, first mass, the turn of the old and new year).

Another component of the *situation of gift* are the partners themselves. They are linked by a certain relation making them manifest these bonds by bestowal; the act of bestowing may also *mediate* in establishing this relation. There are some kinds of interhuman bonds expressed by exchanging gifts. And these are: family bonds, bonds between neighbours and comrades and those originating from commonly performed work or social system as e. g. in the case of wedding or ruler or worker or tenant.

The kind of gift should also be treated as a component of the situation of gift. And here arises the question: what character may it have?

Assuming that a gift has a symbolic meaning, the description of a concrete situation permits to determine what sense is given to it in the language of the investigated culture. This may be a material thing, a word, treatment, doing something, a determined behaviour. The donor's intention seems to be here essential. The form of the gift itself is only the way of transferring this intention, repressing the wish of mutual understanding and unification. The question whether symbol must be something real or a phantom only is a question put by those whose attention is focussed on *searching for meaning*. From the point of view of the relation itself *symbolification* of something, the real or irreal character of the symbolizing *material* is of secondary importance.¹⁹ I should like to add that the situational context determines the structure of various modifications of symbolic expressions, hence, everything that is credited a respective value at a determined place and time can be considered a gift.

The *situation of gift* develops also a ceremony observed at bestowing.

18. J. Tischner, op. cit., p. 98-99

19. J. Tischner, op. cit., p. 98, foot-note 8

This rite belongs also to the mentioned *language* of culture and its proper interpretation makes it comprehensible.

I shall also draw attention to the space (place) in which the gift is offered. As it is known it is valued in different ways and particular places have a determined value attributed by their users. Hence, the space the gift is realized or where it is placed, in case of material objects, is not without significance.

Alike space time also occurs in human mind as a certain quality. Particular time sections (seasons, weeks, days) are considered to bear a determined negative or positive value and this makes us include reflections on time into considerations on gift.

Gestures associated with bestowing are also essential: these may convey the meaning of the act of offering and give it a proper value or may annulate the intentions it should symbolize. Neglecting a proper gesture may destroy the value of gift, depriving it of its power of conveying the feelings of friendship, friendliness, and change it into a sign of hostility.

Attributes the donors or receivers of the gift are equipped with e. g. a harvest wreath, Christmas star etc. have also a determined meaning.

In social life there are numerous *situations of gift*. I would even venture to say that they are one of its significant and common forms. The dialogue people try to establish by use of gift, which permits to convey in a symbolic way contents that are almost inexplicable is carried at a strict observation of the principle of reciprocity. The principle *do ut des* governs the exchange of gifts as well as other forms of social coexistence.

A complaisant contact of man with man - as I have already mentioned - may be formed on the basis of accepted hierarchy of values. The function of a gift as a symbolic sign consists in indicating to values which are appreciated. In dependence on its contextual position it can *speak* in various ways, simply about different values. The situation subjected to interpretation indicates whether the gift expresses a feeling of love, liking, friendship, gratefulness, or sympathy and possibly satisfaction (compensation) for a committed harm. It may be a sign of esteem or wish for getting into closer contacts. I am not trying to give here all the possible variants of symbolic expressions, these could be discussed in full particulars only after analysis of a possibly comprehensive description of various forms of its occurrence.

Bestowal is one of the ways of *being among others*; it indicates not only to the existence of interhuman bonds but also to the value they are given and to the essence of the performed role. The value of the relation which unites people can be recognized by establishing events at which a gift is offered. Their number, standard, and kind of gift to which the feeling of mutual closeness obliges speaks about the value of this relation.

A certain, determined social role performed obliges to bestowal adapting the gift to the occasion. This is, then, the way of expressing esteem to that who is bestowed, but

20. Por. M. Eliade, Methodological remarks on the Study of religious symbolism (w:) The history of religion. Essays in methodology. Red. M. Eliade i J. M. Kitagawa. The University of Chicago Press 1959, p. 86-107; G. Durand, Wyobraznia symboliczna, Warszawa 1986.

speaks also about appreciation of the value of the role performed.

The symbolic meaning of the gift is evidenced by the fact that it may also inform about breaking off or rejecting the relation between people. Returning a gift, not accepting it, or not offering speaks about reluctance, lack, of approval of the other man and even of hostility. This may be illustrated by the fact of returning a gift not accepted as engagement present, as a token of refusing marriage. In the country there is a habit of sending pieces of wedding cakes to the neighbours and neglecting it shows reluctance, an existing conflict. Significant is then not only offering a gift but equally its rejection.

The fact that a symbol bears the ability of expressing simultaneously many structurally congruent meanings that it incorporates many values provokes to seek for *situations of gift*. in many various expressive forms.²⁰ I am going to mention here only a few of them - the most essential ones such as myth, fairy-tale, rite. Reflection of symbolism of gift in myth has not been undertaken as yet. Interest, on the other hand, has focussed on rites which - as it is well known - are of symbolic character by themselves since they transfer contents of special rank, appreciated ideas, and values. Ritual activities ordered and prescribed by a *screenplay* are in metaphoric relation to the vision of the world which is conveyed by them. Bestowal is one of the activities of the ceremony and the fact of its occurrence in the rite has a symbolic value. The situation in which it appears in the drama makes it possible to determine what it speaks about and what contents it carries.

Considerations on the symbolism of a ritual gift have been recently undertaken by a number of Polish ethnographers. Let me mention here the book by M. Maj devoted to the role of gift in the wedding ceremony, articles in *Prace Etnograficzne* and a collective paper *Culture function of gift*.²¹

Situation of gift can be also found in fairy-tales which out of their nature are a symbolic conveyance. The place of gift in narration is not a random one and has its meaning. The context in which it occurs: external and moral features of the people bestowing, place, time, kind of gift, all that speaks about its symbolism. It constitutes a morally positive situation by referring it to positive values. In the dramatic structure of a fairy-tale it is the crucial point permitting development of the action.²²

To end it up it should be stated again that the undertaken attempts at establishing situations in which a gift occurs, its symbolic meaning, readable through contextual analysis in which it occurs evidence clearly that it is a category, one of the more important ones, which permits to understand man and his image of the world.

21. M. Maj, Rola daru w obrzędzie weselnym, Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdansk, Łódź 1986 Ossolineum; R. Godula, Wymiana darów w obrzędach cyklu zimowego, Zeszyty Naukowe UJ *Prace Etnograficzne* No. 20: 1985, p. 29-52; P. Niedermüller, Dary i prezenty w ludowych zwyczajach na Węgrzech, Papers of U. J. *Prace Etnograficzne* No. 18: 1983, p. 13-29; E. Krasinska, R. Kantor, Zwyczaj darzenia w społeczności potomków emigrantów z Polski na Węgrzech, op. cit. p. 31-16; K. Wolski, Dar jako źródło powstania podstawowej własności osobistej u Beludżów i Patanów, op. cit., p. 47-59 and papers in Volume: *Kulturowa funkcja daru*, Papers of U. J. *Prace Etnograficzne* No. 26: 1988; O. Supek, Darivanje kao totalna komunikacija, Etnološka tribina 10 (1987) s. 7-18.

22. Cz. Robotycki, W. Szpilka, W każdej bajce jest ulamek prawdy (O funkcji daru w bajce), Papers of U. J. *Prace Etnograficzne* No. 18: 1983, p. 81-100.

REFERENCES:

- Bukowski, J.: *Zarys filozofii spotkania*, Kraków, 1987.
Godula, R.: Wymiana darów w obrzędach cyklu zimowego, *Zeszyty Naukowe UJ "Prace Etnograficzne"*, No. 20, 1985.
Guriewicz, A.: *Kategorie kultury sredniowiecznej*, Warszawa, 1976.
May, M.: *Rola daru w obrzedzie weselnym*, Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdansk, Lodz, 1986.
Niedermüller, Dary i prezenty w ludowych zwyczajach na Wegrzech, *Papers of U.J. "Prace Etnograficzne"*, No. 18, 1983.
Robotycki, Cz., W. Szpilka: W kazdej bajce jest ulamek prawdy (O "funkcji" daru w bajce), *Papers of U.J. "Prace Etnograficzne"*, No. 18, 1983.
Supek, O.: Darivanje kao totalna komunikacija, *Etnološka tribina*, 10, 1987, 7 - 18.
Svirac, M.: Razmišljanja o daru i poklonu, *Etnoantropološki problemi*, sv. 3, Beograd, 1988, 30 - 35.
Tischner, J.: *Myslenie wedlug wartosci*, Krakow, 1981.
Wegrzecki, A.: *O poznaniu drugiego czlowieka*, Kraków, 1982.
Zawistowicz - Adamska, K.: *Spolecznosc wiejska*, Łódz, 1948.

DAR KAO SIMBOL DRUŠTVENOGA SUŽIVOTA

Sažetak

U članku se razmatra pojam dara i njegov značenjski opseg, a kao polazište se uzima tvrdnja da je dar kategorija kulture. Time on predstavlja jedan od temeljnih i univerzalnih pojmova. Univerzalnost takvih kategorija proizlazi iz činjenice da su one čovjeku svojstvene na svakoj etapi njegove povijesti iako se sadržaj kategorije može mijenjati. One čine osnovni semantički "inventar" kulture. Tretiranje pojma dara kao kategorije polazi od tvrdnje da se bit dara može shvatiti samo onda ako ga se uzima kao element simboličke kulture. Situacije u kojima se on javlja govore o čovjeku koji živi u svijetu određenih vrednota i vrši izbor među njima.

Analiza značenja riječi "dar" i njegovih sinonima te izvedenih glagolskih oblika nađenih u rječnicima poljskog jezika pokazuje da su to znakovi aksiološkog usmjerenja koji pokazuju određene odnose prema različitim vrstama i tipu vrijednosti. Pojam dara ima aksiološku dimenziju, ali i etičku, jer sadrži moralnu poruku. Dar je simbol veze među ljudima čiji je zajednički sadržaj skladan suživot temeljen na prijateljstvu, uzajamnoj dobrohotnosti, zahvalnosti, bezinteresnoj darežljivosti. Neprihvatanje dara znak je odbacivanja i odbijanja ovakvoga kontakta u konkretnoj situaciji. Dar nagrađuje ili služi za oblikovanje stavova kao što su: spremnost za opraštanje, pokazivanje dobrote i milosrđa.

Značenjska struktura pojma "dar" pokazuje da on ima simbolički karakter, koji se temelji na činjenici da se pod neposrednim, literarnim značenjem krije posredni smisao. Potpuno razumijevanje smisla dara moguće je ostvariti spoznavanjem konteksta u konkretnoj situaciji te određenjem odnosa prema priznatim vrijednostima. Tako bit dara

treba tražiti kroz analizu različitih pojava oblika u kojima on tvori svoj simbolički smisao. Ima on značenje u međuljudskim odnosima, kako onih kod kojih dolazi do susreta čovjeka s čovjekom, tako i u različitim oblicima društvenog suživota. Međusobno darivanje ne mora postojati samo u graničnim situacijama kakve su susret i rastanak. Izražavanje osjećaja zajedništva, želja da progovori dar kad nisu dovoljne riječi, susreću se svakodnevno, ali u tom slučaju nema simboličke dimenzije.

Osim intersubjektivnih odnosa do kojih dolazi pri susretu čovjek je i društveno biće, živi u zajednici. Nalazi se u situacijama nužde, ali i potrebe za suživotom te mora održavati veze s drugim ljudima. Jedan od načina iskazivanja povezanosti s društvenom okolinom temeljenom na sporazumijevanju i razumijevanju jest međusobno darivanje. Određenje simboličkog značenja dara moguće je dobiti preko opisa konkretnih situacija u kojima dolazi do darivanja. Koje pojave čine "situaciju dara"? Prije svega to je događaj u svrhu kojega se daje dar, zatim su tu partneri koji razmjenjuju dar, nadalje, vrsta dara, pa ritual njegova uručnja.

Svijest da je bit simbola sposobnost istovremenog izražavanja više značenja strukturno povezanih, tj. svijest da je simbol višeslojan traži od nas osvjetljavanje "situacije dara" u mnogim raznorodnim oblicima iskaza kao što su: mit, bajka, obred. Naš se interes zaustavio uglavnom na obredima koji su po svojoj biti simboličkoga karaktera. Obredne aktivnosti uređene prema scenariju stavljene su u metaforički odnos prema viziji svijeta iskazivanoj kroz te obredne aktivnosti. Darivanje je jedna od obrednih aktivnosti i samim tim činom pokazuje se simbolička vrijednost, a kontekst u kojem se javlja u drami omogućuje određivanje onoga o čemu govori i kakve sadržaje prenosi.

Situaciju darivanja možemo naći i u bajci koja je po svojoj prirodi simbolički iskaz. Kontekst u kojemu nastupa dar, vanjske i moralne osobine darivatelja, mjesto, vrijeme, vrsta dara, sve to govori o njegovoj simbolici. On konstituira moralno pozitivnu situaciju ukazivanjem na pozitivne vrijednosti i ta situacija predstavlja u dramatičnoj strukturi bajke prijelomni trenutak koji omogućuje razvoj akcije.

Dosadašnji pokušaji preciziranja situacija u kojima "dar" ima simboličko značenje što ga možemo odrediti analizom konteksta u kojemu se pojavljuje pokazuju da je dar jedna od najvažnijih kategorija koja omogućuje razumijevanje čovjeka i njegove slike svijeta.