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9th June 2008: observations of a man on the street who says hello and smiles

Posted by [rajni shah](#) on June 9, 2008 at 3:13am

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It is important to remember that given circumstance, given home, given background, given what has been taught and what has been observed and what has not been observed, given privilege, given desolation, given change, given disappointment, given geography, given solitude, given TV, given sex, given deformity, given words that have been spoken, given what has never been heard, given what is expected, given cleanliness on that particular day, given gender, given the capacity to make a mistake, given memory and its covert effects on the body, given brokenness, given the weather, given the languages available between us, given the state of his shoes, given the day he was born, given the number of people in the world, given his capacity for love, given what is about to happen, given what he sees and what he does not see, given everything that has gone before and is all around, he is doing his best.

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Comment by [Joel Chalfen](#) on June 10, 2008 at 12:49pm

All these givens are abbreviated for-givens - we remember in order to forgive and forget. But if art is a gift, isn't this litany of mitigating circumstances precisely the contents of his smile? They are his best because they are all of him, aren't they? Isn't he giving them - "giving circumstance, giving home...etc". If they are "given", they are given on the street and shared, not taken away before he starts doing. But then also 'doing' resists exactly where doing cannot be done. So he is doing his best exactly where his best cannot be done. And doing engages when it gives - that's what you say, right? So, he gave you his best. And then, "Pass on my best," he says. So in 'doing' his best, he is 'passing on' his best for you to continue the chain. Maybe I am doing that too now. Hello.



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