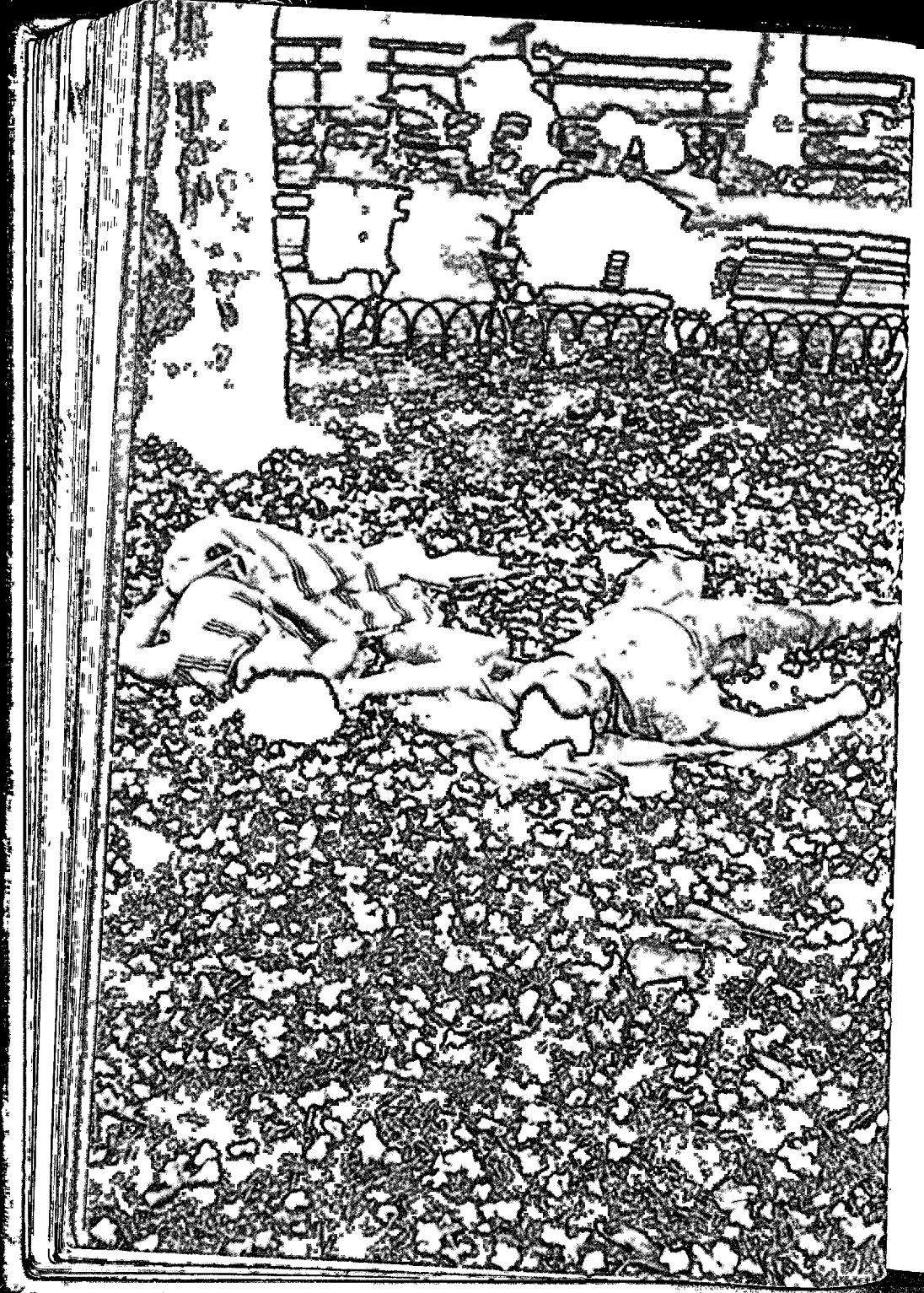

We know, now, what the quality without a name is like, in feeling and in character. But so far, concretely, we have not seen this quality in any system larger than a tree, a pond, a bench. Yet it can be in anything—in buildings, animals, plants, cities, streets, the wilderness—and in ourselves. We shall begin to understand it concretely, in all these larger pieces of the world, only when we first understand it in ourselves.

It is, for instance, the wild smile of the gypsies dancing in the road.

The broad brim of the big hat, like arms spread wide, open to the world, confident, huge, . . . The embrace of the child's arms about the grass. . . . It is the solid and entrenched repose of the old man lighting a cigarette: hands on his knees, solid, resting, waiting, listening.

In our lives, this quality without a name is the most precious thing we ever have.

And I am free to the extent I have this quality in me.

One man is free at that one instant when you see in him a certain smile and you know he is himself, and perfectly at home within himself. Imagine him especially, perhaps, wearing a great wide hat, his arm flung out in an expansive gesture, singing perhaps and for one instant utterly oblivious to everything but what is in him and around him at that second.

This wild freedom, this passion, comes into our lives in the instant we let go.

It is when all our forces can move freely in us. In nature, this quality is almost automatic, because there are no images to interfere with natural processes of making things. But in all of our creations, the possibility occurs that images can interfere with the natural, necessary order of a thing. And, most of all, this way that images distort the things we make, is familiar in ourselves. For we ourselves are, like our works, the products of our own creation. And we are only free, and have the quality without a name in us, when we give up the images which guide our lives.

Yet each of us faces the fear of letting go. The fear of being just exactly what one is, of letting the forces flow freely; of letting the configuration of one's person adjust truly to these forces.

Our letting go is stifled, all the time, so long as we have ideas and opinions about ourselves, which make us hug too tightly to our images of how to live, and bottle up these forces.

So long as we are still bottled up, like this, there is a tightness about the mouth, a nervous tension in the eyes, a stiffness and a brittleness in the way we walk, the way we move.

And yet, until one does let go, it is impossible to be alive. The stereotypes are restricted; there are very different configurations. The infinite variety of actual

people, with their vastly and utterly different forces, require a huge creation, to find the resolution of the person: and in finding this resolution truly, one must above all be free of the stereotypes.

The great film, Ikiru—*to live—describes it in the life of an old man.*

He has sat for thirty years behind a counter, preventing things from happening. And then he finds out that he is to die of cancer of the stomach, in six months. He tries to live; he seeks enjoyment; it doesn't amount to much. And finally, against all obstacles, he helps to make a park in a dirty slum of Tokyo. He has lost his fear, because he knows that he is going to die; he works and works and works, there is no stopping him, because he is no longer afraid of anyone, or anything. He has no longer anything to lose, and so in this short time gains everything; and then dies, in the snow, swinging on a child's swing in the park which he has made, and singing.

Each of us lives most fully "on the wire," in the face of death, daring to do the very thing which fear prevents us from.

A few years ago a family of high wire artists had a terrible fall from the high wire, in the middle of their performance. All of them were killed or maimed, except the father, who escaped with broken legs. But even

after losing his children in the fall, a few months later he was back to work, in the circus, on the wire again.

Someone asked him in an interview, how he could bring himself to do it, after such a terrible accident. He answered: "On the wire, that's living . . . all the rest is waiting."

Of course for most of us it is not quite so literal.

The fear which prevents us from being ourselves, from being that one person unique in all the world, from coming to life—that may mean nothing greater than the fear of giving up the image of a certain job, an image of a certain kind of family life.

One man can be as free in lighting up a cigarette, as that old man dancing on the wire. Another traveling with the gypsies. A handkerchief around your head; a horse-drawn yellow caravan, pulled up in a field; a rabbit stew, simmering and bubbling on the fire otuside the caravan; licking and sucking your fingers as you eat spoonfuls of the stew.

It has above all to do with the elements.

The wind, the soft rain; sitting on the back of an old truck moving clothes and baskets of possessions while the gentle rain is falling, laughing, crouching under a shawl to keep from getting wet, but getting wet. Eating a loaf of bread, torn in pieces, hunks of cheese cut crudely with a hatchet which is lying in the corner; red flowers

glistening in the rain along the roadside; banging on the window of the truck to shout some joke.

Nothing to keep, nothing to lose. No possessions, no security, no concern about possessions, and no concern about security: in this mood it is possible to do exactly what makes sense, and nothing else: there are no hidden fears, no morals, no rules, no undercurrent of constraint, no subtle sense of concern for the form of what the people round about you are doing, and above all no concern for what you are yourself, no subtle fear of other people's ridicule, no subtle train of fears which can connect the smallest triviality with bankruptcy and loss of love and loss of friends and death, no ties, no suits, no outward elements of majesty at all. Only the laughter and the rain.

And it happens when our inner forces are resolved.

And when a person's forces are resolved, it makes us feel at home, because we know, by some sixth sense, that there are no other unexpected forces lurking underground. He acts according to the nature of the situations he is in, without distorting them. There are no guiding images in his behavior, no hidden forces; he is simply free. And so, we feel relaxed and peaceful in his company.

Of course, in practice we often don't know just what our inner forces are.

We live, for months, for years, acting in a certain way, not knowing whether we are free or not, doubting, not even sure when we are successfully resolved, and when we aren't.

Yet still there are those special secret moments in our lives, when we smile unexpectedly—when all our forces are resolved.

A woman can often see these moments in us, better than a man, better than we ourselves even. When we know those moments, when we smile, when we let go, when we are not on guard at all—these are the moments when our most important forces show themselves; whatever you are doing at such a moment, hold on to it, repeat it—for that certain smile is the best knowledge that we ever have of what our hidden forces are, and where they lie, and how they can be loosed.

We cannot be aware of these most precious moments when they are actually happening.

In fact, the conscious effort to attain this quality, or to be free, or to be anything, the glance which this creates, will always spoil it.

It is, instead, when we forget ourselves completely: playing the fool perhaps among a group of friends, or swimming out to sea, or walking simply, or trying to finish something late at night over a table with a group of friends, cigarette stuck to lower lip, eyes tired, earnest concentration.

All these moments in my own life—I only know them now, in retrospect.

Yet each of us knows from experience the feeling which this quality creates in us.

It is the time when we are most right, most just, most sad, and most hilarious.

And for this reason, each one of us can also recognize this quality when it occurs in buildings.

We can identify the towns and buildings, streets and gardens, flower beds, chairs, tables, tablecloths, wine bottles, garden seats, and kitchen sinks which have this quality—simply by asking whether they are like us when we are free.

We need only ask ourselves which places—which towns, which buildings, which rooms, have made us feel like this—which of them have that breath of sudden passion in them, which whispers to us, and lets us recall those moments when we were ourselves.

And the connection between the two—between this quality in our own lives, and the same quality in our surroundings—is not just an analogy, or similarity. The fact is that each one creates the other.

Places which have this quality, invite this quality to come to life in us. And when we have this quality in us, we tend to make it come to life in towns and buildings which we help to build. It is a self-

supporting, self-maintaining, generating quality. It is the quality of life. And we must seek it, for our own sakes, in our surroundings, simply in order that we can ourselves become alive.

That is the central scientific fact in all that follows.

CHAPTER 4

PATTERNS OF EVENTS

In order to define this quality in buildings and in towns, we must begin by understanding that every place is given its character by certain patterns of events that keep on happening there.