

# CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Acknowledgments	xv
<b>PART I. THE ART OF SELF-FASHIONING</b>	
1. The Call of Character	3
2. The Process of Becoming	21
3. The Specificity of Desire	40
<b>PART II. THE ART OF SELF-RESPONSIBILITY</b>	
4. The Blueprints of Behavior	63
5. The Alchemy of Relationality	80
6. The Ethics of Responsibility	99
<b>PART III. THE ART OF SELF-SURRENDER</b>	
7. The Swerve of Passion	123

viii CONTENTS

8. The Upside of Anxiety	141
9. The Erotics of Being	159
Notes	177
Index	185

## PREFACE

One of the peculiarities of this book is that it presents relatively complex ideas in relatively simple language. I chose this approach because I believe that my topic—the question of what makes each of us a unique and idiosyncratic character—should be accessible to readers beyond the academy. At the same time, I have sought to avoid the overly simplistic tone of much of the popular writing on the theme. When self-help or New Age gurus tackle the question of what it means to lead a fulfilling life, the kind of life that feels worth living, they tend to advocate a streamlined program of (concrete or spiritual) steps that is supposed to lead to a harmonious existence, thereby sidestepping all the ways in which human life is not designed to be harmonious. Likewise, they tend to fall back on an untheorized notion of what it means to be a human being in the first place, talking as if the matter were completely straightforward. It's not. As a result, if this book has a goal, it is to remain