

**PART II**

THE ART OF  
SELF-RESPONSIBILITY



# 4

## The Blueprints of Behavior

The manifestations of a compulsion to repeat . . . give the appearance of some “daemonic” force at work.

—Sigmund Freud

### 1

One of Freud’s most influential findings was the so-called repetition compulsion: the idea that we tend to repeat blueprints of behavior that are not good for us.<sup>1</sup> This is the case when we, despite our earnest efforts to the contrary, fall into the same relationship problems, the same professional dilemmas, the same maddening “issues” with our partners, parents, siblings, friends, or coworkers, as we always have. We may find ourselves regularly attracted to lovers who disillusion us. We may find ourselves endlessly replicating the same professional failures. Or we may find ourselves fighting with our father in exactly the same way as we have done for forty years. When it comes to the compulsion to repeat exasperating patterns, the wisdom of experience does not seem to hold much sway. Indeed, it is often when we think that we have finally broken