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## 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