



Matthew's Enigma: A Father's Portrait of His Autistic Son

Matei Calinescu

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Matthew's Enigma unfolds the complex relationship between a father, who is a Romanian emigré and distinguished university professor, and his son, who was diagnosed with autism when he was 7 years old. Matei Calinescu's desire to understand Matthew—his namesake—is the theme of this moving memoir. Calinescu's determined search for the meaning of his son's enigmatic illness continues even after Matthew's sudden death at age 25. Reminiscences about Matthew's life are interwoven with observations of his behavior and reflections on the difficulties that autistic persons encounter in social situations. Drawing from journals that he kept, beginning with Matthew's birth, as well as from his experience as a scholar of literature and philosophy and a reader of psychologists' and brain scientists' writings about autism, Calinescu has composed an inspiring and lyrical essay about love and illness, memory and forgetfulness, sociability and alienation.

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