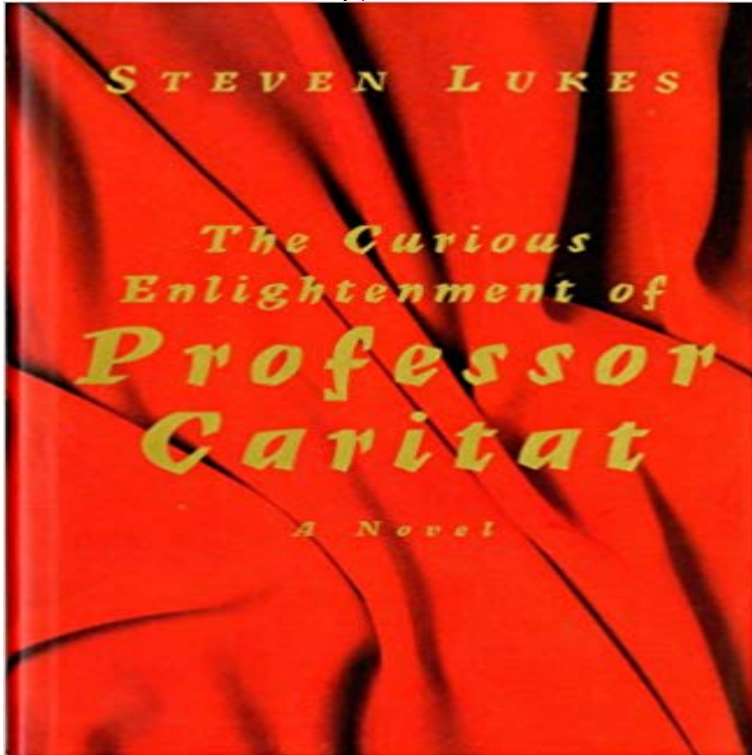


The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat: A Novel



In the space of 24 hours, Caritat is arrested by the police, then liberated by the guerrillas of the Visible Hand. They give him the code name Pangloss and send him on a mission which only a philosopher could undertake: to find the best of all possible worlds. This book is a whirlwind journey through a series of imagined political landscapes where 18th-century ideas confront late-20th-century concerns. Caritat, a middle-aged Candide, walks naively through worlds of ideological extremes, equipped with only a small travelling bag and a knowledge of such thinkers as Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant and Hume. As he investigates the neighbouring countries of Utilitaria, Communitaria and Libertaria, Caritat encounters afresh questions he had long since considered settled: what are the rights of the individual when, in the calculator-ruled Benthamite world, the concept has been ruled obsolete; what is the fate of free speech in a militantly multicultural society; and where does civil responsibility figure in a state ruled by the free market? Cut loose from the confines of the ivory tower, this wandering professor is made to confront the perplexed state of modern thinking, the value of history, and, above all, the continuing need for a just and humane social order. This book presents a near-comprehensive survey of Western political philosophy in a comedy of ideas. Steven Lukes is the author of *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*, *Power: A Radical View* and *What is Left?*.

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