

poses dangers, including religious coercion on the part of service providers as well as sectarian favoritism on the part of government. At bottom, what divides these camps is whether James Madison was right when he asserted that government's use of religion as an "engine of civil policy" is an "unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation." Neutralist proponents of government-backed, faith-intensive programs—whether designed to encourage sexual abstinence among teens, rehabilitate felons, or solve problems of substance abuse—reject Madison's sentiment.

This book can bring the reader up to speed on the faith-based initiative's intellectual and political history. But with Congress stalemated over one issue—religious discrimination in employment by faith-based groups—the initiative's future will play out on several different fronts: the states, many of which have been reluctant to implement it; the executive branch, which has been extremely active in making new policy over the past year; the lower courts, where the initiative has already experienced significant defeats and victories; and the Supreme Court, whose decision in *Locke v. Davey* this year has recognized the states' power to separate religion and government further than the Constitution requires. Until the election of 2004 determines whether the initiative's cheerleader in chief remains in office, these are the places to measure the effort's vital signs.

—IRA C. LUPU

THE HAPPINESS PARADOX.

By Ziyad Marar. Reaktion Books.
208 pp. \$19.95

Ziyad Marar is after the Grail. For those of us who believe in this world alone, this life alone, there's nothing better than happiness. "It is the only good answer to the question *What would you ask for if you had only one wish*," he writes in his introduction. "It is the thing we want for our children."

Though published in England, this book seems aimed at Americans, the people who wrote the pursuit of happiness into a founding document. Since 1776, the chase has only hotbed up. Marar notes that "the world database of happiness" identifies 22 scholarly articles published between 1900 and 1930. Since

1960, nearly 3,000 social science studies have pondered happiness, in addition to a glut of pop psychology articles.

Editorial director at Sage Publications in London, Marar opens with a visit to Amman (his father was Jordanian), where he asked an uncle: Are you happy? "He talked for a while about his work, his family, their health, my grandfather, the state of the economy," Marar recounts. "I pressed for more: 'But are you actually *happy*?' After a while he just looked at me blankly. . . . This peculiarly Western question was incoherent when detached from the aspects of life that contribute to a good life, well-lived." Kant exemplifies the uncle's tradition with "the dictum that morality is not properly the doctrine of how we make ourselves happy, but how we make ourselves worthy of happiness."

Marar pulls quotes from a variety of sources, including Erica Jong, Bertrand Russell, Pablo Neruda, and Joni Mitchell. He seems to be having fun writing this book, and we can't help but join in. No pretension is safe. On romance we get La Rochefoucauld's observation that "many people would not have fallen in love had they not heard of it." The sacred image of man as a single and separate moral being is also assaulted. "We are governed by an invisible web of expectations and finely balanced codes and rules," writes Marar. "In occasional contexts, like the pressure not to be the first person to clap after a concert, we come to glimpse the silent, and usually concealed, power of others that permeates our identity."

The book gives a history of happiness, corners it in work and in love, and then devotes the final chapter to the paradox flagged in the title—namely, that we desire the approval of others and, at the same time, freedom from others. "It is not simply that these needs contradict one another," Marar writes. "They are literally paradoxical in that the successful expression of the one requires the assertion of its opposite."

Perhaps it's churlish of me to turn against a book that gave so much pleasure, but I had hoped for more. Marar has a light, welcoming style, and he meets the great questions with deep knowledge and an open heart. It's a tragedy—and I use the word advisedly—that his happiness paradox turns out to be a rather prosaic idea.

—BENJAMIN CHEEVER