

Current Books

François Truffaut. This movie-mad bunch became critics for the influential journal *Cahiers du cinéma* and then filmmakers of the French New Wave.

Along with retelling that story, Colin MacCabe, a professor of English and film at the University of Pittsburgh, places Godard in another familiar tale: Scion of a cushy background finds Marx and rebels against the bourgeoisie. While films such as *Une femme mariée* (1964) and *Masculin féminin* (1966) probe the topic of consumerism with a relatively detached eye, *Week-end* (1967) depicts France as a decaying nation overrun by greed. As MacCabe notes, *Week-end* is the work of “someone who has reached a point of total disgust and rejection of his own society.” The film closes with the words “End of Cinema.”

Godard’s next films, including *British Sounds* (1969) and *Vent d’est* (1970), sketch a nebulous Maoist ideology that dictates cultural revolution. They are, writes MacCabe, “in some simple sense unwatchable—the premise of each is that the image is unable to provide the knowledge that it claims.” Through a partnership with the filmmaker Anne-Marie Miéville, Godard has subsequently returned to engaging the audience rather than hectoring it, but his politics haven’t changed.

MacCabe illuminates the historical and theoretical contexts, but he doesn’t deeply analyze the films themselves. It’s a conscious choice, and probably a wise one. There’s no substitute for watching such masterworks as *Breathless* (1959) and *Contempt* (1963).

—CHRISTOPHER BYRD

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES AND THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

By Jo Renee Formicola, Mary C. Segers, and Paul Weber. Rowman & Littlefield. 214 pp. \$68, \$23.95 paper

As a matter of both substance and institutional allocation of power, the Bush administration’s faith-based initiative is sprawling. It raises profound issues of welfare policy and church-state relations. All three branches of the federal government play significant parts in the enterprise, as do the states. And the initiative tackles the politically charged task of distributing funds among faith-based entities, with African American churches and white Protestant evangelical groups in particular standing to gain.

In *Faith-Based Initiatives and the Bush Administration: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, Jo Renee Formicola, Mary C. Segers, and Paul Weber, political scientists all, appraise this tangle of substantive and institutional concerns. The “Good” portion of their book neatly summarizes the initiative’s conservative intellectual underpinnings; the “Bad” chapter discusses the potential legal constraints; and the “Ugly” segment recounts the considerable political strife spawned by this effort, both within the executive branch and

between Congress and the White House. The book’s conclusion raises a multitude of questions but offers few answers.

Far more than most presidential policies, the faith-based initiative is shaped by constitutional doctrines. Three decades ago, judges probably would have invalidated major elements of the initiative. First Amendment rulings then barred government from funding “pervasively sectarian” institutions. But by the time George W. Bush took office in 2001, those sweeping restrictions had disappeared (though others remained). The following year, the Supreme Court ruled that government could, through tax-funded vouchers, purchase services with explicitly religious content—a result sharply inconsistent with the jurisprudential trend of the early 1970s.

Formicola, Segers, and Weber are least illuminating with respect to the deep conflict, within both the Supreme Court and the political culture, between neutralist and separationist visions of church-state relations. Neutralist approaches require government to treat religious and secular organizations evenhandedly. Separationist approaches, which hold religion to be constitutionally distinctive, would disable government from aiding an individual’s religious experience. Neutralists and separationists agree that the Bush initiative

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