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See below for the full text of the review, courtesy of the author.

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Robert Friedmann, *Design for Living: Regard, Concern, Service, and Love*. Edited by Maxwell Kennel. Preface by Leonard Gross. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017. 200p.

At first glance, Robert Friedmann is an unlikely advocate for Anabaptism. He grew up in a Jewish home, fought in World War I, and only began a study of Hutterite origins when, disillusioned by the war, he entered the University of Vienna. After the Nazis took over Austria, he emigrated to the U.S., where he joined the Mennonite Church and became a noted scholar of Anabaptist history. Brief glimpses of his eventful life story are included in the present volume in both Maxwell Kennel's Introduction and the Preface by Leonard Gross.

From 1945 until 1961, Friedmann was Professor of History and Philosophy at Western Michigan University and in 1954 he taught a course in philosophy entitled "Design for Living", in which he developed a basis for living a virtuous life – a life consistent with Anabaptist ideals. At the end of the course one of his students presented him with a transcription of his lectures. He edited these notes into what he hoped would be a publishable book. It was among his papers when he died in 1970. His friend, Leonard Gross, attempted to publish it but the manuscript was rejected on the grounds that it would not find a significant readership. It has finally been ushered into print as a labour of love by Max Kennel.

According to the Forward by Gross, Friedmann tried to avoid direct references to Anabaptist core values because he thought that they would be inappropriate for a philosophy course in a secular institution. The result is an argument for those values that is conducted using mostly secular language and drawing many of its illustrations from a range of secular writers and thinkers (including Emerson, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Beethoven). In a couple of key instances, Friedmann does appeal to religion. Only those open to the divine, he says, will appreciate the full savour of his ideas. But in no case that I could discover does he depend upon specifically Christian assumptions. This is a strength of the book. It argues for an approach to ethics that should appeal to any person of faith, as well as to many people without explicit religious belief who recognize the sanctity and dignity of human life.

In his Introduction, Friedmann claims that this is "no book on 'ethics"'; it is, rather, an "existential philosophy of life." I admit to being somewhat baffled, but I have always been baffled by existentialism. For me *Design for Living* is emphatically a book on ethics, and a good one. Friedmann's objective is to provide us with a way to design our behaviour ("educate our hearts") so as to make our lives truly meaningful:

"'Design' then means the pattern which enables the individual to approximate his life's meaning. ... We might err, sin, fall, betray ourselves, but the pattern still remains in our personal existence (and then acts as conscience and reminder).

Design is thus always a maximum ethics for the individual, no dictation from outside, but absolutistic and total from the inside." (p 116)

Friedmann identifies four key steps in his design: regard, concern, service and love. Regard means recognizing that human beings are ends in themselves and not means to an end. For this Friedmann appeals to both Christianity and "Enlightened Humanism" (he comments that "the classical philosophical formulation that man is an end in himself, and nothing else, we owe to Immanuel Kant" (p 122)). His vigorous argument for regard, which includes a renunciation of slavery and an early defence of feminism, is one of the best sections of the book. The first step in our design is to recognize that all other people are our equals and have a claim on our attention.

The second step is concern. After we recognize the other person, concern means taking that person's experiences, joys, worries, interests, and anxieties into ourselves and making them our own. Friedmann has a big word for this: "introception." But the idea is accessible without the term. "Concern is born out of a desire to share and participate with the experience of others." (p 131) It's interesting to note that Friedmann identifies this step as one that requires an appeal to the divine: "Concern transcends traditional philosophy and philosophical ethics, and belongs already to another level which I would be inclined to call the religious one." (p 130) I'm not sure I agree. It seems to me that a persuasive and purely secular argument could be made for this step, based on an act of sympathetic imagination (much like the one we perform when we read a novelist like Tolstoy).

Service is the step in which we actually do something about the concern we feel for the other. Friedmann is careful to distinguish service from altruism, which he sees as an abstract ideal that is directed outward and imposed on its object. Altruism is part and parcel of the relentless struggle for life of social Darwinism. Service, instead, is mutual. It is, in his formulation, "joy," but it is also something we can learn: "Thus service is and should be a guiding principle in our design for living. It can be strived for, developed, and learned, until it becomes almost our second nature." (p 137) You will know them by their fruits, and service is the fruit of the educated heart.

The final step is love, and here Friedmann does depend on transcendence. "It is our deepest belief that humanity is created in the image of God, and that means that in our blessed moments we may grasp a glance at that which is above us. ... In love we find that which is absolutely meaningful and final." (p 139) This section is provocative and requires faith. For Friedmann, only love can provide the motivation for ultimate sacrifice, and perhaps that's true. But is it necessary for his more general ethical project? He cites Matthew 25:35-40, saying it suggests "love is very well applicable in life." (p 144)

"... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

I would argue that we can fulfil the call of this passage by appealing *only* to service. That is, we can make a nonreligious case for the service prescribed by Jesus, and that ethic can be made universal. Friedmann himself goes a long way toward accomplishing exactly that.

Friedmann ends the book by describing some potential barriers to his design. They include the usual suspects – money, power and sex – but also "thoughtlessness," the escape into an uncaring and amoral indifference. Finally he tackles free will. Without some notion of it, we cannot reasonably defend any ethical system because ethical action always depends on moral choice. Although Friedmann keeps his free will argument in secular terms, I think it fails. He ends, as so many of us do, by simply pronouncing that some form of it *must* exist. Ultimately, I believe, a conscious design for living requires a leap of faith. Although I have never particularly admired Pascal's wager, a form of it seems to apply here. We choose to live *as if* we can determine our actions and they can make a difference. We take that bet.

This is a very fine book. Friedmann evidently wants it to be more than just ethics, but for me its ethic is enough. I would put it on my shelf beside such modern moral philosophers as Michael Sandel, Susan Nieman and Philip Kitcher (all secular heirs of Kant and the Enlightenment). It is not merely Anabaptist or even merely Christian:

"People everywhere who accept the same essential goal and the same principles leading to it, might thus be bound together in a horizontal (though invisible) fellowship. Nameless in practice, it would in reality be an 'Order of the Concerned.' It means being concerned with the predicament of modern man and subsequently with the discovery of an alternative to futility." (p 131)

We need that now, more than ever.

*–Charlie Roth, Rainham Mennonite Church*