Robert Friedmann. *Design for Living: Regard, Concern, Service, and Love*. Edited by Maxwell Kennel. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017.

Historian and philosopher Robert Friedmann entrusted both his edited transcription of "Design for Living," a lecture he gave at Western Michigan University in 1954, and the manuscript of "The Theology of Anabaptism," to historian Leonard Gross, who was to publish both works. However, only the latter was published (1973), while "Design for Living" remained "slumbering" in the archives of Mennonite Church USA. Its publication was rejected because it was not expected to interest a wide circle of readers. Only when the editor of the present volume, Maxwell Kennel, came across it in his research on the relationship between Mennonite theology and philosophy did the path to very late publication open up.

Friedmann, who was born in Austria but emigrated because of his Jewish ancestry, spent his life studying the history of the Anabaptists. The Hutterites, with their strong notion of community, especially piqued his interest. He always sought to ensure the results of his historical research would speak into the present time and to point out guidelines for a meaningful life

that were useful for society. This desire was reflected in his interest not only in the Anabaptists but also in the ideas of religious socialism. Not surprisingly, his desire to awaken and strengthen interest in community and the common good shines through, time and again, in *Design for Living*.

Friedmann propagates a "We-Philosophy," which he distinguishes from both "individualism (egocentrism)" and "collectivism" (116). At the same time, he repeatedly emphasizes that he is concerned not only with "faith" but with the life of faith, with concrete conduct. Anabaptist texts represent only a part of the literature consulted in *Design for Living*. Friedmann, who privately felt close to the Mennonites and even closer to the Quakers, prefers to advert to the Russian existentialists, especially Leo Tolstoy. Friedmann repeatedly discovers a we-philosophy in Tolstoy's works.

In *Design for Living* the reader encounters a philosophically-oriented and widely read author. Using examples from political theory, literature, and philosophy, Friedmann approaches "the good life," one that is worthwhile and should be filled with meaning. He sets out through history in search of the best design for such a life, taking readers on an exciting journey as he gradually fills in the basic conception with definite content.

The book is divided into two major sections. In the first, the author discusses what a design for living is not, and in the second he sketches a positive matrix of what should give direction to life. The basic prerequisite and center for the search is "an educated heart" that must not limit itself to mere intellectual achievement or knowledge accumulation. For Friedmann, an educated heart should lead the person on the right path and help them to differentiate between what counts most and what forces them into faulty patterns. The goal is not the observance of an ethic but the realization or actualization of essential values beyond everyday things, and the development of a program of life.

To begin, Friedmann describes four paths that could lead people to grasp "the things that matter most" and that can potentially provide a valid design for living: the Christian way, the Stoic way, the Nietzschean way, and "the conventional pattern of modern middle-class life." He works through the premises and the outputs of each path. He excludes hedonism and "enlightened self-interest" because they do not make life worthwhile. They understand morality as only external convention and a "minimum

ethics" that contains important values for society but is not sufficient to give meaning to one's life. Friedmann counts decency among the minimum ethics, as it does not go beyond social conscience or convey higher values and tends towards self-righteousness. Even the Decalogue and the Golden Rule as handed down in Matthew 7:12 can be external laws and rules if they are not understood as asking for love and community, or as offering a "final or superior" pattern of life (35). Amoralism and self-realization are equally insufficient. The self needs more guidance.

Friedmann then offers content that can fill out a design for living. It is already revealed in the book's subtitle: "Regard, Concern, Service, and Love." However, these ideas must not lead to an ethic that limits itself to the application of rules and the observance of laws. A certain basis of moral-ethical values is necessary, but a design for living must always be of a spiritual and social nature, shaped by a desire to serve others and to perceive their needs and hardships. It should be guided by human dignity and freedom, and spring up from within the person, never dictated from the outside. Friedmann puts readers on the path of "a maximum ethics for the individual" that is "absolutistic and total from the inside." He defines the ideal design for living as a "pattern which enables the individual to approximate life's meaning" and to live in terms of "the permanent theme that runs through life" (115).

For Friedmann, the Bible provides the most comprehensive guideline for all existential questions. There the highest form of love becomes concrete, especially in Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. The author draws on biblical examples to show ways out of the greatest temptations to which humanity can be subject: money, power, and sex. In his view, stewardship, cooperation, and the institution of marriage are a way to handle these temptations.

In the end, Friedmann calls for seeking a mature life that is concerned with learning "the art of meaningful living and the art of making responsible decision[s]" (166). His quest, as outlined in this book, aims at a holistic education of the human being and the education of the heart, in a long process of searching in which the person is not satisfied with stereotypical answers and rote knowledge. Knowledge must be put into practice. This path excludes empty generalizations and calls upon us to be mature, free, and

personally responsible, yet always in contact with God and oriented towards the community.

Astrid von Schlachta, Director, Mennonite Research Center and lecturer at the University of Regensburg, Germany.