

Beyond focusing on Mennonite involvements through “sending” agencies, the book has a whole chapter on “Somali Islam and Peacemaking” and another chapter on “Mennonite Peacebuilding Education and Women Peacemakers.” These two chapters are preceded by a chapter on “The Appeal and Failures of Intervention” and another on “Mennonite Peacemaking Practices During the Civil Conflict.” These two chapters set up a range of tragic challenges for the Somali people and clan structures. The conceptual interactions of these four chapters present a saddening presentation of the weakness of neo-liberal interventionism in engendering long-term change for the positive.

The book also holds the stories of how Christian witness can change lives and relationships at multiple levels. The realities of service, witness, and peacebuilding in this book, and the long-term presence of this “peace clan,” could be read as one continuous “process platform” that turns into structured forms of hope—many Somalis continue to come to Mennonite institutions for peacebuilding training; Somaliland has a peacebuilder training program where many Mennonites have been welcomed to teach; and, the Mennonite “brand” of Christianity is known as separate from other Christians and worthy of trust. These three movements of coming to professors, welcoming professors, and naming enduring trust is the bond of peace that becomes “the healing of the nations.” The last chapters of this book describe these developments.

What happens when the calm eye of an enmity hurricane begins moving slowly in the opposite direction of that enmity? This book holds 1,001 answers to that question.

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Design for Living: Regard, Concern, Service, and Love. By Robert Friedmann. Edited by Maxwell Kennel. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock. 2017. \$25.

Design for Living is a previously unpublished work by Robert Friedmann (1891-1970). Friedmann was an Austrian scholar of Anabaptism who fled Europe in the years prior to World War II. With the help of Roland Bainton and Harold Bender, Friedmann made his way to Goshen College in 1940 and served as a visiting scholar there for three years. He spent the rest of his academic career at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. Friedmann was known for his “existential” interpretation of Anabaptism, most fully articulated in his posthumous book, *The Theology of Anabaptism*. To Friedmann, an existential faith is one in which theology has its basis in the concrete situation of life rather than a speculative or rational system. It means a fundamental orientation of a person toward discipleship that shapes the entirety of life.

Editor Maxwell Kennel has provided us with a new window into Friedmann’s thought with the publication of *Design for Living*, a manuscript that originated as lecture notes from an undergraduate course taught in 1954. This book reflects Friedmann’s attempt to articulate a meaningful philosophy of life by translating

the values of Anabaptism into a public, secular context. As such, Friedmann builds an argument for a life oriented toward values of regard, concern, service, and love without assuming a prior commitment on the part of his audience.

Friedmann begins the argument in the introduction and first chapter by noting the basic existential condition of human life: We find ourselves in a finite, mortal existence that we are obliged to fill with meaning and purpose. Life has to be “designed” by orienting oneself toward certain values and decisions. He spends the first chapter working through some of the most common pitfalls, including hedonism, relativism, self-realization, and minimal ethics.

In the second part of the book, spanning chapters 2 and 3, Friedmann argues that meaning has to be created in a concrete, interpersonal, and absorbing (i.e., existential) way. He argues for the basic social nature of human life, in which meaning can be created only through the recognition of our interdependence and responsibility for others. He argues that human life is always a process of development and growth requiring us to move from a minimal understanding of our responsibility to a mature one. This process of self-education has to be based in concrete action, not merely intellectual exercise.

A transitional argument in chapter 3 holds that meaning can be achieved only through overcoming obstacles. True meaning requires us to sacrifice lesser goods in service of a higher principle. Thus, a design for living will require self-discipline and continual effort.

In chapter 4, Friedmann outlines a positive vision for a meaningful life. Although meaning can take different forms, Friedmann argues that any meaningful life is characterized by four principles: regard; concern; service; and love. Regard is the Kantian recognition of other people as ends in themselves. Concern means expanding the regard for others into a personal responsibility to alleviate suffering. Service is the translation of concern into concrete action. Love is the crowning achievement of meaning through the integration and universalization of the other three principles.

One might ask, since the original manuscript was written so many years ago, how relevant Friedmann’s philosophy of life is to current readers. Kernel gives two possible justifications for the book in his introduction. More narrowly, the book offers a distinct perspective into Friedmann’s thought that might be useful for those interested in his Anabaptist scholarship. Or, in a broader sense, the book might be read as it was originally intended as an insightful analysis of the human condition.

In the first sense, the book does succeed in expanding our understanding of Friedmann’s thinking. Those who are familiar with his scholarly work on Anabaptism will find many of the ideas in *Design for Living* familiar, but in this book Friedmann has the opportunity to define and expand his ideas in ways that would not occur in his other writings. We see, for instance, concrete examples of what an existential faith might look like apart from the milieu of sixteenth-century Anabaptism. *Design for Living* helps us see the practical implications of Friedmann’s existential interpretation of Anabaptism more clearly than we could have otherwise.

The second possibility, that *Design for Living* might continue to be relevant philosophically, is more ambiguous. On the positive side, some of Friedmann's arguments feel very contemporary even though they were written sixty-plus years ago. For example, anyone who teaches ethics to undergraduates will immediately recognize each of the pitfalls discussed in chapter 1. This chapter alone could be assigned at the beginning of an introductory ethics course to help address some of the assumptions that students bring with them into the classroom. Unexamined amorality, relativism, and individualism are no less prevalent now than they were in the 1950s.

There is also a sense in which the datedness of the book actually contributes to its relevance. It is refreshing to read philosophy that is so connected to "the bone of everyday experience," as Kennel puts it (xx). Friedmann writes with a breadth and down-to-earth practicality that is, I think, rarer now than it would have been in the 1950s, but which contributes well to the ideal of liberal education as a holistic endeavor.

On the other hand, some aspects of the book do seem more damagingly out of date. In keeping with Friedmann's existential framework, the book stays mainly at the level of interpersonal ethics. The argument does emphasize that meaning is found through social or communal responsibility, but the book seldom addresses systemic causes of injustice. This comes out most clearly in his discussion of "service" in chapter 4 (132-149), in which the primary exemplars are individuals and non-profit organizations like the Red Cross. There is nowhere an indication that a meaningful life might require political engagement beyond relief work or service professions.

Also, a twenty-first-century reader will find parts of the book unnecessarily stodgy. I appreciated Kennel's thoughtful editing; much of the gendered language is updated while leaving the meaning of the text intact. But several comments might remain obstacles to using this book as a popular text or undergraduate textbook. For example, Friedmann objects several times to aesthetic appreciation as a distraction from a meaningful life. He says, "We might regard it quite as a general law that the 'aesthetic' and the 'ethical' dominate the human heart in inverse ratio." He points to the rise of "horror stories" in film as a symptom of amorality (39). He is concerned that aestheticism leads to "a kind of playfulness that nowhere takes life too seriously" (104). Similarly, Friedmann's discussion of the temptations of sex, power, and money in the conclusion feel less nuanced than "preachy." This is all interesting as a window into Friedmann as a scholar and a person, but could be off-putting if the book is used as a standalone philosophy text.

Overall, as someone who has been influenced by Friedmann's theological work, it is fascinating to have access to a manuscript that Friedmann himself rated highly but that had not found publication until now. Many thanks to Maxwell Kennel and Leonard Gross, Friedmann's former student and a champion of the manuscript, for acting as custodians and making it available for general readership.