

## Questions for Discussion and Points to Ponder

### Introduction

The authors describe a different approach to design and production, calling it “an emerging movement, [they] see as the next industrial revolution.” (6) Do you see this as a realistic or possible reality? Do you believe that the current movement towards sustainability is a step in the right direction? What ways or ideas can you think of that would make this possible?

The authors describe life in a variety of places, from Japan to the Bedouin in the Jordan River Valley to Brazil and Germany; do you believe the United States is in the forefront or behind in the movement towards environmentally friendly policies and laws? Do you see this changing under the leadership of the current president and if so, how?

### Chapter One

The authors discuss the negative consequences of the industrial revolution, what are they and were you aware of the adverse effects of industrial production? (18) Is it worse as manufacturing leaves the United States and goes to other nations, such as China and India? Does it create more harm to them, causing greater destruction across the world?

The story of Henry Ford is briefly discussed in this chapter, how timely is this discussion given the current state of the automobile industry in the United States? Do you think that if the automobile industry had heeded Ford’s principles it would be in a stronger position now, or would it be in trouble regardless? (21–24)

The authors list the positives of the industrial revolution, but they emphasize the negative consequences – do you agree with their assessment and why? (26)

The idea of “cradle to grave” design is viewed as an inherent design flaw in the manufacturing process; what do the authors mean by “universal design and manufacturing” and why do they see this as harmful and inefficient? (29)

Global warming is briefly addressed in this chapter, there have been challenges to the idea of global warming over the past

decade, do you think it is a pressing issue, or do you side with those who view the warnings as over-reacting? (31,32)

What do the authors mean by the “strategy of tragedy” versus the “strategy of change”? (44) Are they offering solutions that can, and should, be taken seriously?

## Philadelphia University Summer Reading 2009

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<http://sosaphilau.blogspot.com>

**Chapter 1:**  
A QUESTION OF DESIGN

Post By: *July 17*

**Chapter 2:**  
WHY BEING “LESS BAD” IS  
NO GOOD

Post By: *July 24*

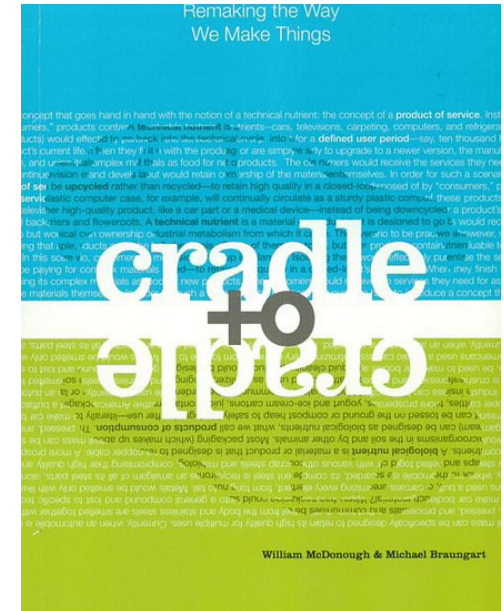
**Chapter 3:**  
ECO-EFFECTIVENESS  
Post By: *July 31*

**Chapter 4:**  
WASTE EQUALS FOOD  
Post By: *August 7*

**Chapter 5:**  
RESPECT DIVERSITY  
Post By: *August 14*

**Chapter 6:**  
PUTTING ECO-EFFECTIVENES  
INTO PRACTICE

Post By: *August 21*



## Reader's Guide to Cradle to Cradle

by William McDonough  
& Michael Braungart

The authors of Cradle to Cradle want to create a new way of looking at design and how it can be used to better our world; they build upon their personal experiences in design to offer the reader a number of suggestions that are intended to get one to rethink how we produce, utilize, consume, and dispose of products. The book's over-arching theme is that we need to rethink the basic parameters of design and creation in order to establish a better system of manufacturing, one that will ultimately replenish and restore the earth, versus destroying it. The authors deride the premise that this will involve severe sacrifices, but instead suggest that if approach the concept of design and manufacture with a new point of view, it will make the process of manufacture, consumption, and waste a process that works in sync with people and the environment, rather than at odds with nature.

## Chapter Two

The authors want us to really think about why we focus on the following when it comes to manufacturing and design, why do we want to: “reduce, avoid, minimize, sustain, limit, [and] halt” versus solving the problems? (45) Why has the emphasis to make the industrial process less destructive, versus a more harmonious progression that unites humans and the environment?

Who was Thomas Malthus and what were his warnings? While his ideas were carried forward into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, why did it take until Rachel Carson’s 1962 book *Silent Spring* for the ideas to really take root?

What do the authors say the issue with “eco-efficiency” and how it works? Why is “doing more with less” not enough? Also, they take the four R’s to task – why isn’t it enough to reduce, reuse, recycle and regulate? (53) Explain what the authors specifically say about reduction, reusing, recycling (or as they all it, “downcycling” and the problems created by regulation. (56)

Is the pitting of the environmental movement against industry truly a sign of “design failure” and is eco-efficiency a failure? How do the authors explain failure? (Remember that it has a much to do with practical needs, such as housing and agriculture as it does imagination.) (54-67)

## Chapter Three

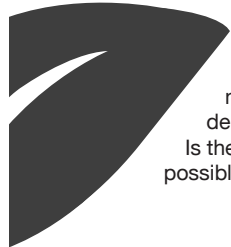
What are the differences between eco-efficiency and eco-effectiveness? Why do the authors use books and buildings as examples? (76)

Did you ever think of nature as not being eco-efficient, because it combines beauty with practicality – is that our lesson to be learned from this book, that we can unite both?

Why should the emphasis in design not be on “fixing” and more on redesigning or recreating? (78-81)

What about the author’s discussion of space; do you agree that there may be potential that humans make a mess here on earth and then try to go elsewhere that is less hospitable? (87)

When the authors assert that they are not anti-technology and not focused on deprivation, do you find this surprising? Is their call to a “new design assessment” possible or even realistic? (90,91)



## Chapter Four

What do the authors mean by “cradle to cradle” as a biological system of nature? How do they divide biological mass and industrial mass, and what do they mean? (92)

What is the difference between biosphere and the technosphere? their division make sense to you? (93)

The authors discuss the problems surrounding the importation of food – do you think it is caused by adopting foreign methods of consumption, production, and waste disposal and how can this impact local economies? (96)

Do you agree with the assertion that we can eliminate waste by redesigning them to be part of a larger “biological metabolism” equaling a way of reuse that is chemical free? (104)

The authors also discuss changing technical consumption of products to one where consumers use items over a “defined user period” that is limited; would this work? Could we phase out waste in this manner? (111)

## Chapter Five

One of the most interesting assertions the authors make is that there is a problem of “sameness” that permeates design; why is it environmentally better, according to them, to “respect diversity” including culture, place, landscape and need? (119)

Why is it so necessary to utilize local materials? Was part of the problem created because the industrial revolution was based on the assumption that people had power over nature? (128)

What about the role of architects in design, particularly regarding home design? How does this impact the profession of architecture, but also design in general? How are fashion designers incorporating eco-friendly or green fabric into their designs? Can the same be done for buildings, can they be made more environmentally friendly?

Why is energy so crucial to the process of cradle to cradle design? Not only in terms of solar and wind, which the authors discuss, but also what they call “upcycling” in buildings?

Is the solution to the problem created by inefficient design to have an industrial re-evolution that will not only take, but give back? How feasible would this be for nations around the world to employ? (154)



## Chapter Six

The authors create and list steps that will lead to eco-effectiveness, relying on ideas such as respect, ecological intelligence, even creativity and fun; explain their solutions for the problems we have created and whether or not they make sense as outlined? (166-180)

By looking ahead with an eye on nature and new ways of design, is it possible to create the world the authors describe, one that functions today and will continue to do so for future generations?

~Reader’s Guide Written By: Dolores Pfeuffer-Scherer,  
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