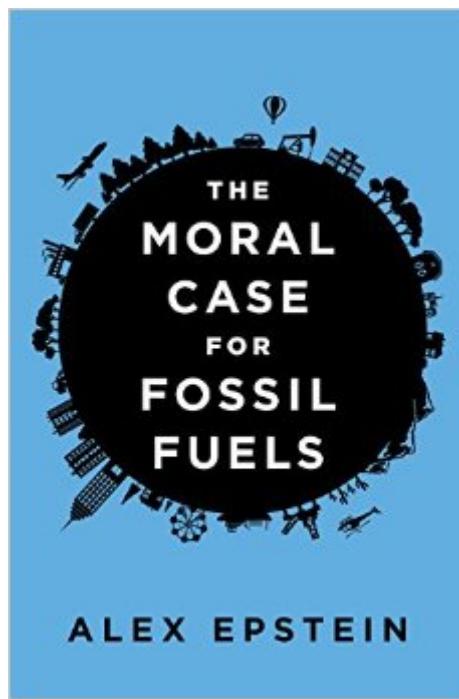


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# The Moral Case For Fossil Fuels



## Synopsis

Could everything we know about fossil fuels be wrong? For decades, environmentalists have told us that using fossil fuels is a self-destructive addiction that will destroy our planet. Yet at the same time, by every measure of human well-being, from life expectancy to clean water to climate safety, life has been getting better and better. How can this be? The explanation, energy expert Alex Epstein argues in *The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels*, is that we usually hear only one side of the story.

We're taught to think only of the negatives of fossil fuels, their risks and side effects, but not their positives—“their unique ability to provide cheap, reliable energy for a world of seven billion people. And the moral significance of cheap, reliable energy, Epstein argues, is woefully underrated. Energy is our ability to improve every single aspect of life, whether economic or environmental. If we look at the big picture of fossil fuels compared with the alternatives, the overall impact of using fossil fuels is to make the world a far better place. We are morally obligated to use more fossil fuels for the sake of our economy and our environment. Drawing on original insights and cutting-edge research, Epstein argues that most of what we hear about fossil fuels is a myth. For instance . . .

**Myth:** Fossil fuels are dirty. **Truth:** The environmental benefits of using fossil fuels far outweigh the risks. Fossil fuels don't take a naturally clean environment and make it dirty; they take a naturally dirty environment and make it clean. They don't take a naturally safe climate and make it dangerous; they take a naturally dangerous climate and make it ever safer.

**Myth:** Fossil fuels are unsustainable, so we should strive to use renewable—solar and wind. **Truth:** The sun and wind are intermittent, unreliable fuels that always need backup from a reliable source of energy—usually fossil fuels. There are huge amounts of fossil fuels left, and we have plenty of time to find something cheaper.

**Myth:** Fossil fuels are hurting the developing world. **Truth:** Fossil fuels are the key to improving the quality of life for billions of people in the developing world. If we withhold them, access to clean water plummets, critical medical machines like incubators become impossible to operate, and life expectancy drops significantly. Calls to “get off fossil fuels” are calls to degrade the lives of innocent people who merely want the same opportunities we enjoy in the West. Taking everything into account, including the facts about climate change, Epstein argues that “fossil fuels are easy to misunderstand and demonize, but they are absolutely good to use. And they absolutely need to be championed. . . . Mankind's use of fossil fuels is supremely virtuous” because human life is the standard of value and because using fossil fuels transforms our environment to make it wonderful for human life. •

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I found the book very interesting and worth reading. I do agree with most of the assertions in the book, but not all. It is rather unfortunate that the author sometimes resorts to the same type of [edited] biased sources and omniscient voice that makes me doubt the claims of many environmentalists. Full disclosure: I have worked in the oil & gas industry my entire career, however I do not dismiss climate change and feel strongly about the need to be environmentally responsible. Many environmentalists seem to believe that if you make your living from fossil fuel extraction that you can't possibly hold these views. They are wrong, and I can honestly report that the people I work with in the industry do not fold their horns back into their heads at the end of the work day. They are mostly honest, caring and responsible people - from the field operator to the corner office. The oil & gas industry does not have a preferential appeal to people of poor character and irresponsible views. We live in an age where decisions about energy policy and personal energy use must be made in a balanced way. We are indeed dependent on fossil fuel energy, for many of the reasons the author presents in this book. And like him, I do not think that is a bad thing for our planet. Why -- because I know our human nature will drive us to discover alternatives that will eventually blend to jointly address the characteristics he puts forward -- cheap, plentiful, reliable and scalable. In the meantime it would be wildly irresponsible to artificially restrict (from a market point-of-view) the use of fossil fuels. In order to continue the scientific innovation required to eventually retire the use of fossil fuels, we need to continue to produce and use fossil fuels. It's time that we recognize that there is a logical, sound, fact-based position in the middle of the frothing

debate occurring on the fringes in both extremes of the scale. I was hoping this book would stake out the ground for this position, but I did not completely resonate with the message from the author. It is an interesting book that make good points that need to be considered by all, but still does not comfortably define my own position. The debate on energy policy should be about AND, not OR.

You may think you've read it all when it comes to Fossil Fuels. You haven't. Whether you're a 'thought leader', an 'industry shill' or somebody in between, you will be surprised, one way or the other, with Moral Case for Fossil Fuels. I'm somewhat familiar with author Alex Epstein and all he does. Yet I was surprised by the premises contained in MCFF. Pleasantly surprised, I might add. Full disclosure: I \*wish\* I was paid off by Industry. I'm the starving artist type: part-time job, full-time wannabe writer. I read this book on my phone, while walking to and from work. However, I reckon I can spare a few hours to thank Epstein for presenting me with an exceedingly rare pick-me-up to keep me going during the rough days. Despite being so absorbed an SUV nearly ran me over. At least it wasn't a Prius! Moral Case for Fossil Fuels has content you've never been exposed to before. Ever wondered which industry enables you to do anything at all? Build a home? Take a pill? Skype with a friend or loved one? Vacation in another country? Survive on life support? Eat and drink anything you want, whenever you want? Read this review? Live a few more years? Sure, it's the computing, communications, medical, transportation and agricultural industries. Guess what enables those? Don't hold your breath for Greens to explain that. You'll turn blue. Which makes me see red. So why have I awarded this masterpiece only four out of five stars? Politics. And book reviews in general. I imagine most five-star reviews will be breezed over or ignored, to be taken as friends lending a hand or other self-interested sources adding their money's worth (oh the humanity!). Ditto the one-stars: Greenies gonna hate. The rating system has a mere maximum of five stars. Personally, I give this at least thirty-seven stars - roughly one for each and every premise Epstein presents throughout his book. People who share his views will buy Moral Case for Fossil Fuels. As I do and have. That's hopefully a given. Also, much as a passing pigeon poops on a Pagani, the Greenies will do their little drive-by smears. If I had a dollar every time I read something like 'industry shill', I could buy \*their\* opinions. Meanwhile, I genuinely hope any 'thought leaders' shall put some time and effort into refuting the arguments contained in this book. I - and no doubt Epstein as well - am genuinely curious about how they will respond, both here and elsewhere. You bring the butter and popcorn, I'll sell the tickets. We'll use the proceeds to fund a prototype cold fusion reactor. That'll give 'em convulsions. Talk about idiot children! If you, dear potential purchaser, have read this review in its entirety, it is precisely \*you\* to whom Epstein wants to reach out to.

Perhaps the title evoked a reaction of some sort. Maybe you've heard about it via the grapevine or the pipeline and want to know more. Perhaps you need a reference for a school project. Or perhaps you're more the inquisitive type, willing to set aside your squirmies for five minutes and see what the hubbub is about. The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels may well prove to be industry's *Atlas Shrugged*. The 'thought leaders' will hate it. It'll be fashionable to pan it. Yet I suspect many, many people will buy and read it. The kind of people who live in the real world. The kind who read the 2-4 star reviews. The kind like you and me.

I was in turn provoked and intrigued by this book. I was mostly expecting a strident litany of right-wing talking points and climate change denial. What I found was a thought-provoking examination of the costs and benefits of our massive use of fossil fuels. I was continuously surprised by both the research I was reading about and the reasonable perspective the author invited me to take. With each chapter, I found my own perspective widening to include information I hadn't thought about or encountered before, despite having studied climate change for well over 1000 hours over the last few years. I am still a bit stunned about that. I believe that the topic of energy and the environment is one of the most important social conversations of the next decade. The costs (and potential costs) of using fossil fuels for energy are well publicized. The benefits are generally unstated or downplayed. This book shows us the critical importance of weighing the costs against the benefits to make optimal decisions for both people and planet. I stand confident that whether you like or dislike the book, you will profit from reading it, and be provoked to clarify your own stance on what may be the most contentious issue of our time.

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