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Externalities of Fossil Fuel Combustion: An Ethical Reassessment of Liability

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As the global population increases and less developed nations experience economic expansion, energy consumption will grow dramatically. Much of this demand will be met by combustion of fossil fuels, which transfers carbon from natural subsurface sequestration to accumulations in Earth's atmosphere and hydrosphere. The impacts of this geochemical redistribution are causing immense damage and stressing most of our planet's ecosystems, including the habitats of hundreds of millions of people. The costs of these "externalities" are currently borne by the victims, a concept of liability contrary to fundamental ethical principles.

