

The Systemic Effects for Politics

Piketty himself is not pessimistic about the fact that R is above G . He points out that political change can bring the runaway accumulation under control, say, via a wealth tax. He also suggests that traditional liberal measures—like raising lower- and middle-class wages, lowering corporate management wages, closing tax loopholes, increasing access to education, and so on—can help bring about such a reversal.

But there are systemic effects that act against a political solution. Greater wealth leads to many things, including:

- **Greater political leverage.** Wealthy people and corporations have great lobbying power with public officials, and it is getting greater all the time.
- **Greater control over public discourse.** Wealthy people and corporations can control public discourse in many ways—by owning media outlets, sponsoring shows, massive advertising, and so on. This control works via the brain. Language and imagery that activate conservative frames will also activate conservative morality—strict father morality in general. As conservative morality gets stronger, progressive morality gets weaker in the brains of the public. This mightily affects what people believe unconsciously as well as consciously, and therefore affects how people vote.
- **Greater control over the rights of others.** Through state control of legislatures, the wealthy can control the voting rights of poorer populations, and state control is cheaper than national control.

What is needed is government payment for elections and serious regulation of political control of the media. But given the present distribution of wealth and the present distribution of strict father morality in the population in the United States, as well as other countries, the necessary political change seems unlikely—unless there are other important changes brought on by progressives willing to build the grounding frames for systemic issues, and to keep the focus on these issues sharp and strong