abstract and procedural) discussions about how equality itself should be constituted, our attention is directed to concrete and specific situations—lives as they are actually lived. Developing the concept of the "1 percent," for instance, allowed inequality to be made concrete and thus directs attention to actual specific issues rather than to general principles.

The appeal of this argument is therefore to reposition social critique on a nontranscendental basis that disputes the overarching paradigm endorsing values of modernization and growth. Rather than history being seen as a backdrop that we have somehow left behind, this allows us to recognize it as part of who we are, and where we will go. It is the social counterpart of the environmental sensitivity regarding the implications of climate change for long-term sustainability. Indeed, this highlighting of inequality leads us, above all, to a recognition of the vital need for long-term social sustainability. Intergenerational justice, as well as our commitment to the as-yet unborn, becomes the overarching political goal.

4: The Stakes of the Inequality Paradigm

I have emphasized that there is more to the inequality paradigm than meets the eye. Indeed, there is more to the inequality paradigm than inequality. This is amply clear from the two trailblazing books that introduced the significance of inequality to broader audiences. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010), and Piketty (2013) argue that inequality matters by demonstrating that social advance is *not* produced by continued economic growth. Thus, Wilkinson and Pickett emphasize that the world's most economically advanced nations do not necessarily have fewer social problems: In fact, poorer but more equal nations score more highly with respect to good health and well-being. This theme picks up on the extensively discussed "paradox of happiness" that the economist Richard Layard has made famous: Increasing prosperity does not lead to more overall happiness once a certain threshold of economic development has been reached. Piketty's argument is captured in his famous formula $r > g$, namely, that returns to capital will exceed the growth rate—and therefore, that more growth will only enhance the relative gains of those with the most capital, leading to enhanced inequality and a vicious and reinforcing circuit. The more growth there is, the more