

“Degrowth, youth and utopia

Understanding the roots of distress in order
to take ownership of our future Health



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Leipzig, 3-10-2013

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Jean-Louis Allon



LA DECRESCITA, I GIOVANI E L'UTOPIA

**Comprendere le origini del disagio
per riappropriarci del nostro futuro**

Prefazione di
Maurizio Pallante



Edizioni per la decrescita felice

Circolo della Decrescita Felice di Torino



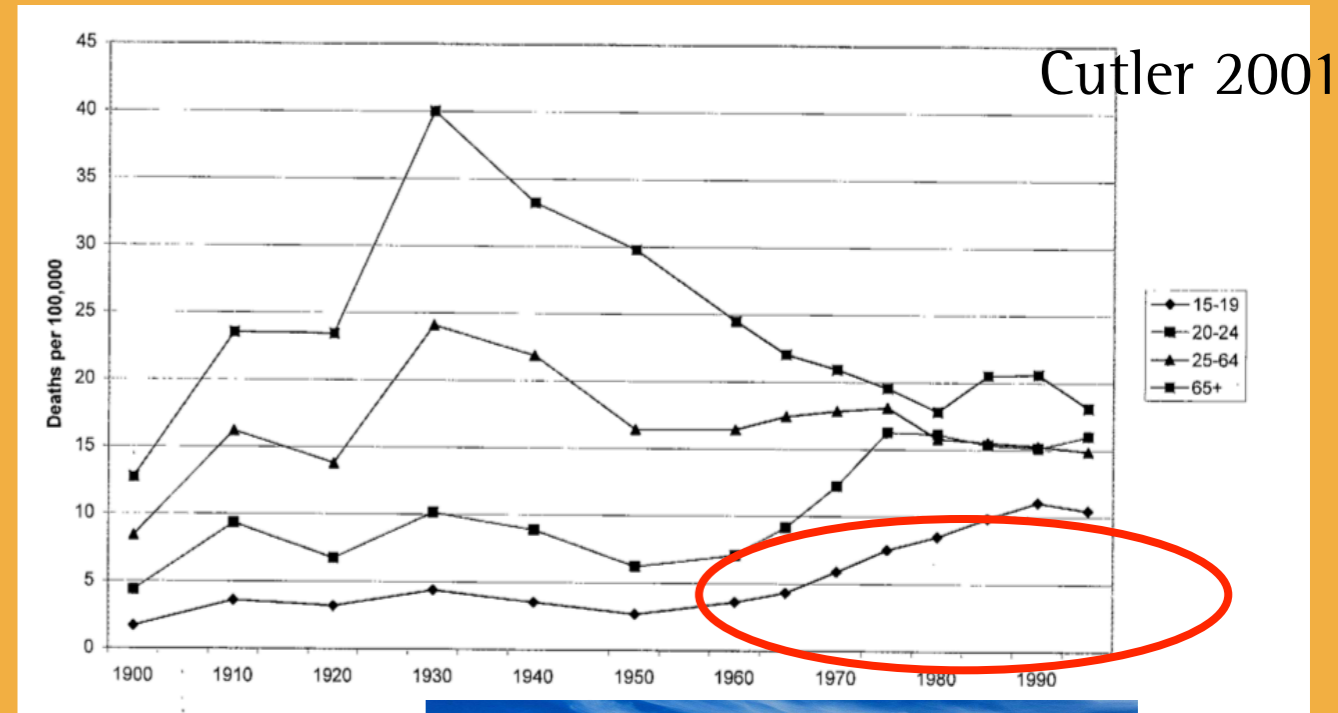
1. Youth distress in Western society

Youth distress

- Suicides: x 3 between 1950 and 1990 in U.S.A., Canada, Spain,...
- + Major Depressive Disorder: 6,6% U.S.A. (Ryan 1992)

The 2011 ESPAD Report

Substance Use Among Students in 36 European Countries



- Alcohol and drug consumption

Eg. Cocaine heavy consumption: +30% (2001-14)

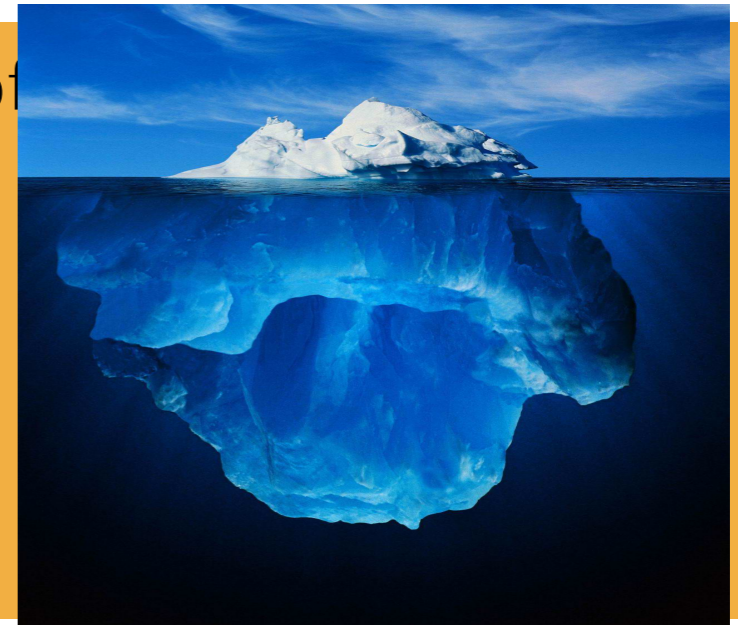
- Psychotropic drug (sedative/tranquilliser): 14 % of



8% prescription

6 % without prescription

Developmental crisis



A different distress



Work alcoholism
money/consumption worries
lack of time for relationships

Emptiness, boredom,
Lack of meaning/direction
Future?



1. The origins of distress

Future: from the promise to the threat

Distress: no psychological origin-> widespread sense of sadness, a feeling of general insecurity and precariousness that characterizes the whole contemporary society.

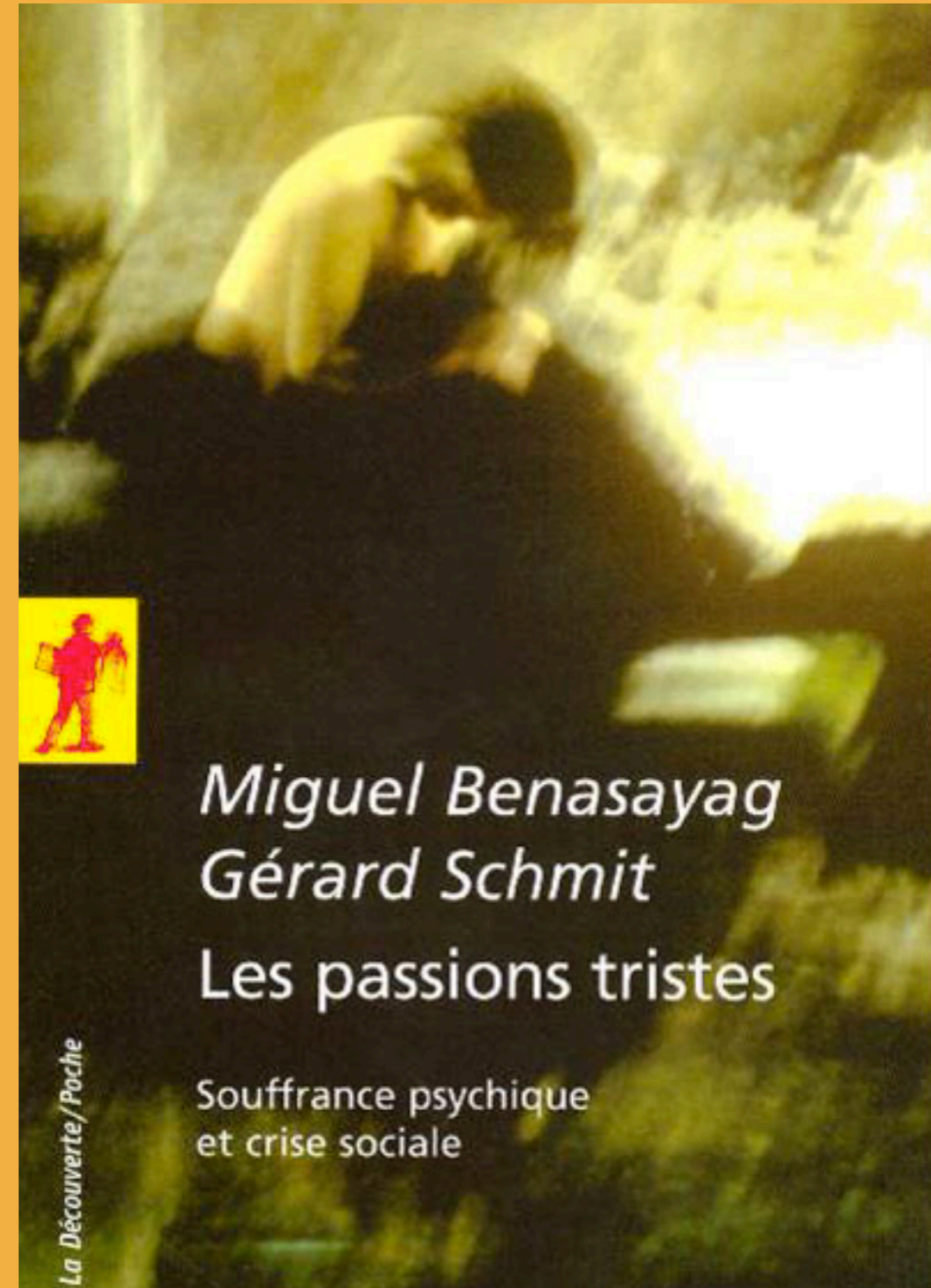
An extraordinary crisis: ~~individual~~



the consequence, experienced by the individual, of the crisis of our society.

the imaginary of future has changed

promise → threat.



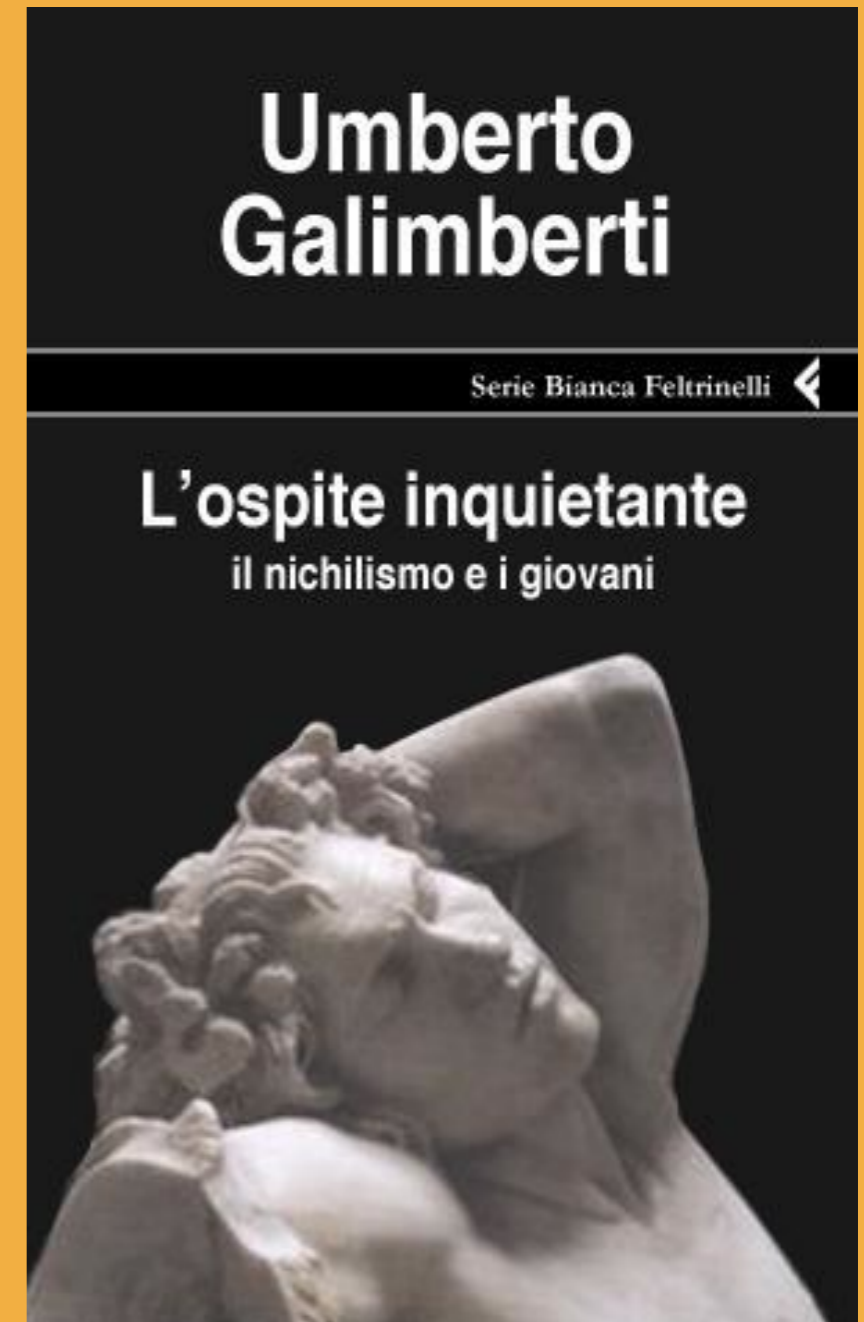
Nihilism: a disturbing guest

- Young people malaise – not for usual existential crises



a disturbing guest: **nihilism**

- Sad passions: not suffering or crying, but impotence, disintegration and lack of meaning.
- **Cultural Crisis** of the foundations of our civilization, of absolute values (god, the truth, the good).
- Optimistic view has collapsed. God and his heirs (science, socialism and utopia) are really dead



Past removal

No future (threat)

Values

without guidance

Parents, teachers

Eternal present

Identity?

Emptiness

“all is possible/no limits”
+++ freedom

Hedonism
Consumption

I must be the best!
I must be happy!

Market →

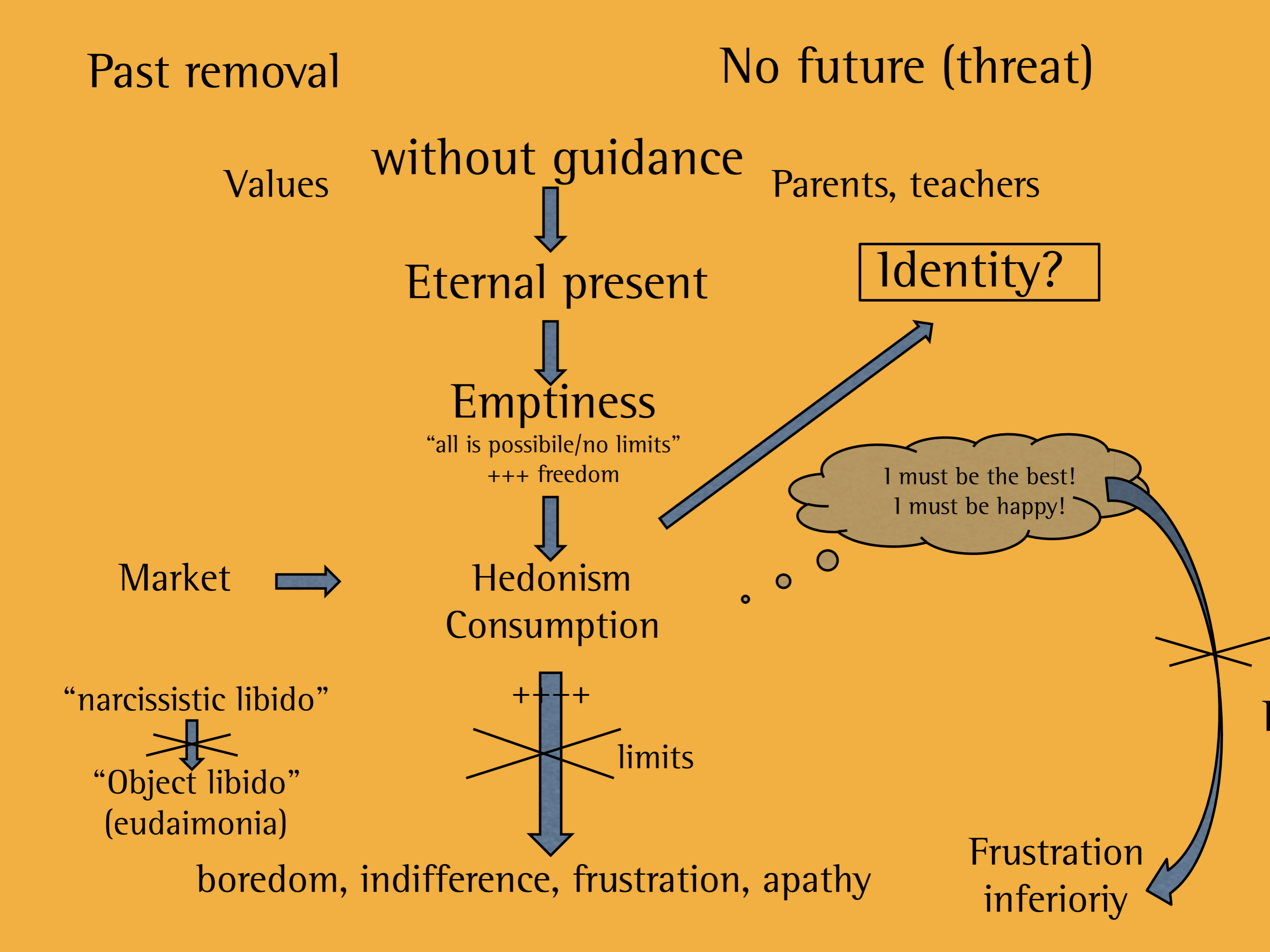
“narcissistic libido”

↓
“Object libido”
(eudaimonia)

++++
limits

boredom, indifference, frustration, apathy

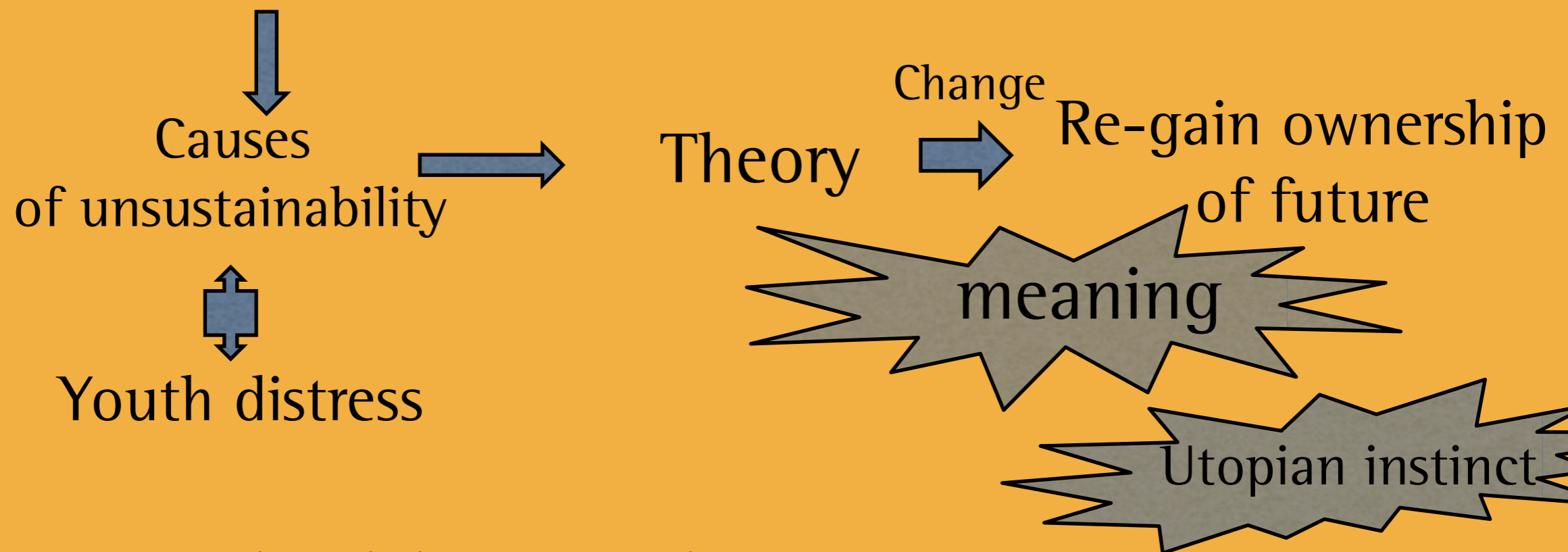
Frustration
inferiority



III. Degrowth as a part of the solution

Degrowth as a part of the solution

1. recognize youth sufferance and legitimize it
(understandable reaction to the huge cultural and economic crisis)
2. Crises: not inescapable -> consequence of unlimited growth



3. To watch Nihilism straight in its eyes -> opportunity

(Heidegger 1987)

IV. How to explain degrowth to youth

Different problems/different solutions

≠ language

≠ ways to explain degrowth

≠ solutions



+ practice!

Thanks for the attention



Utopia lies at the horizon. When I draw nearer by two steps, it retreats two steps. If I proceed ten steps forward, it swiftly slips ten steps ahead. No matter how far I go, I can never reach it.

What, then, is the purpose of utopia? It is to cause us to advance.”

Eduardo Hughes Galeano

Youth and Utopia: a biological necessity

- Utopia instinct as a fundamental driver for human cultural evolution.

e.g. ants

- Repression in growth society
- Climate change: threat



- Antibody for human survival

