

Abstract of the paper given by Howard Barker at the platform on February 14.

Naturalism has for some considerable time been the official art of late democratic capitalism. Its accessibility – a word profoundly decayed but a blunt instrument of coercion – renders it a suitable form for delivering messages critical of society. Taking a remark of Theodor Adorno, that art is a form of knowledge which expresses through its autonomy what is concealed by the empirical form of reality, I attempt to elucidate why empirical reality and its imitation – the naturalistic act – serve to disguise other forms of knowledge which can be approached only through tragedy, with its poetic discourse and hypothetical situations.