

THE EXISTENTIAL IRONY OF MAN

Invent a horrid want, a shameful doubt
Luxuriate in license, feed on night,
Make inward bedlam — and will not come out.
Why should we? Stripped of subtle complications,
Who could regard the sun except with fear?
This is our shelter against contemplation,
Our only refuge from the plain and clear.
Who would crawl out from under the obscure
To stand defenseless in the sunny air?
No terror of obliquity so sure
As the most shining terror of despair
To know how simple is our deepest need,
How sharp, and how impossible to feed.

FROM “DIAGNOSIS” BY MARCIA LEE ANDERSON

The irony of man’s condition is that the deepest need is to be free of the anxiety of death and annihilation, but it is life itself which awakens it.

FROM *THE DENIAL OF DEATH* BY ERNEST BECKER