“Be modest! It is the kind of pride least likely to offend.” Although in our society, we are not taught to associate modesty with pride. In the dictionary, it is defined as being free from vanity, egotism, or boastfulness. Not that the dictionary is wrong, it is just distorted. For when it comes to true modesty, there is no such thing. Modesty is nothing more than a façade for the conceited and a favorable label for the insecure.

“I don’t know… I’m just not sure the dress really looks good on me,” the girl mumbled gazing into the dressing room mirror. As though a switch had been turned on, compliments began to pour out of her friends’ mouths.

“What are you talking about?” they both asked with alarm.

“Oh, you are so modest!” one friend commented.

“You look gorgeous!” the other friend said.

“I wish I was as pretty as you,” the first friend gushed.

“You should get that one. It compliments your figure!” the second one added.

The girl smiled slightly, appearing to be comforted by her friends’ kind words.

“Thanks. You guys always know what to say,” and they did always know, for they always said the same things. It was like clockwork. “I think I will get this one.” As they walked towards the checkout counter, the sly girl planned out her next self-criticism. She then waited with excitement for the coming onslaught of praise.

Modesty is a ruse used to invite others to boost self-esteem. It is the dislike of a school picture. It is the negative comment about your reflection. It is the de-emphasis of a good grade. It is the masking of confidence. This type of modesty is arrogance, for being confident is not egotistical. Modesty is self-pity. It is a call for attention. It is the avoidance of eye contact when being complimented. It is a euphemism for the self-conscious. It is perceived as a positive trait. Modesty is a hoax. It is a sham. It is a gambit. It is an illusion made up by people to be polite while describing someone. It’s an art. Modesty is a lie that damages only the modest.

So many things have been tacked on to the concept of modesty that twist its persona and falsely justify it. Modesty is not the shy girl in the back of the class. It is not a virtue. It is not being humble. Modesty is not having a low opinion of yourself; it is a call for reassurance of what you already know about yourself. It is not underestimating one’s importance. It is not related to humility. Modesty is not decency. It is not a positive aspect; it is just a term used to hide the act of pretty people drawing compliments from everyone around them. Modesty is not real.

People cannot be modest; they can be self-conscious, or they can be liars. According to Lord Chesterfield, a statesman from England who wrote countless letters of advice to his son in college that were later published as a book, “Modesty is the only sure beat way when you angle for praise.” The lord understood that people are selfish, and they are willing to verbally degrade themselves for the kind words of others. The lord does acknowledge that this is not the only method to receive praise; however, he correctly states that it is the only guaranteed way, for what monster would further insult someone who is pitying themselves?

Modesty is an art perfected by those who want praise from others. It is nothing more than a negative statement uttered by someone with the intention of someone else to hear it and negate it. It is a lie. I am not innocent of utilizing modesty, but having been on both sides has given me a new perspective of what modesty truly is. Let me tell you, it is nothing good.