

Welcome Peter Konstans!

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Nice to meet you Elli! I insist on modesty and courtesy as highly useful tools in procuring and maintaining harmonious interactions and relationships and just like a chef's knife I insist that these tools be kept always sharp. Courtesy means that you never deliver words and gestures that directly disparage someone's appearance, intelligence, competence or character except if you deliberately intend to hurt that person. Epicurus was known to be frank and yet highly courteous. Myriads of problems that diminish the pleasure in life could be avoided or diminished in intensity if people had better courtesy skills. Less pleasure in life translates not only to a diminished quality of life but also diminished quantity. It's no accident that people in the blue zones live so long even as their material circumstances fail to impress. They live so long in quantity not least because they cultivate high quality friendships and this high quality in friendships is simply not possible without excellent courtesy skills. Modesty is also crucial when it comes to developing courtesy. If courtesy were a robust and vibrant plant, modesty would be the nutrient-rich soil it grows upon. Remember Caesar. He won the civil wars and was now effectively a king but since he lacked the modesty of an Augustus he made it a point to insult the senatorial class (these were fiercely proud people) in various grave ways including cuckolding them. These offensive behaviors and gestures got him butchered and this act led in turn to a new civil war in which large sections of the Roman upper class perished. It is clear that Caesar was one of those persons that you could either love or hate so either you were his stooge or you despised him. That's what Epicurean modesty means to me and it doesn't have anything to do with austerity in consumption patterns or submissive humility. It means not being the kind of person who would rather have lackies than friends and who enjoys making himself hated. It means trying to be the kind of person that Epicurus was, who was said to have been a spring of continuous blessings to all those who consorted with him. It means being the kind of person whose gravestone could justify carrying those beautiful Roman words from Martial: 'nec illi terra, gravis fueris: non fuit illa tibi'.