

Mistrust

To mistrust is to feel lack of confidence in another person's commitments or behaviors. It is to feel, when you ask or expect something of that person, that there is doubt they will do what they say or promise. The consequence of mistrust is usually a decision not to put further trust in that person. However sometimes it is too late to withhold your trust. The untrustworthy person may already be living it up in Buenos Aires with your girlfriend.

1

Agess ago I had a girlfriend I thought totally charmed by me. One night after a poetry reading I went back to her house, we read poetry together, and we slept together. It was pretty exciting. Under the heat of the event we told each other a lot of romantic things. We made commitments in language. Rather inexperienced, I believed it all—what she said and what I said. A few days later I was told in all confidence and innocence, by a colleague in my Department, that he had been sleeping around recently, and that one of his conquests, just the night before, had been the young lady I was fascinated by. I was astounded. Not much time had passed, since my encounter with her. I said nothing, smiled, and went on with my business. The result was that I mistrusted the woman, and in a sense myself.

2

I have learned to mistrust much that people say. For example I have been told, by academic colleagues, that it is dangerous to walk at night in big cities, in my own country. Yet I have often done just that, walked wherever I liked at night in big cities, and I have never seen or had any difficulty. I have walked through dark parts of Manhattan at night. People have treated me OK, as they do in the day. My colleagues tell me I am naïve, a dumb whitey. They may be right. But am I to ignore the experience of a lifetime? Am I to bemoan the danger of walking in cities at night? Or am I to ignore the alarmed remarks of my colleagues?