



CHAPTER 17 | Qui rogat, non errat (Who Asketh, No Mistaketh Maketh)

Asking questions seems out of fashion. How often do you hear someone start a sentence in the media, at work or in your immediate surroundings with who, what, where, when and how? If done right, these sentences end with a question mark and leaves room for a long answer. This means that the person to whom the question is asked has more than the choice of answering yes or no. An open question forces the person being asked the question to think about the subject. By asking open questions, the questioner gains insight into the motives of the person to whom he is asking a question. An example of an open question is: 'What do you think about it' or 'How do you mean? An example of a closed question is, "You're not going to like it, are you? A closed question usually contains an assumption about what someone else might think or find. An assumption is the image that someone has formed of reality. It is not based on facts but on the outcome of thinking from the need to stay within one's own safe frame of reference. After all, if you ask an open question, the other person's answer may be perceived by you as undesirable. The other person may agree with you or have a different idea. If the other does not agree with you, the ego is hurt. In order to prevent this, an advance is made in the question on the possible unwelcome answer. The average journalist has professionally made it an art to ask closed questions containing a conviction, a suggestion or an accusation. After all, the journalist has already formed an opinion on the subject. By using this technique of asking questions, he tries to get that opinion confirmed. This is the world upside down. Why should we care about his personal opinion? Surely it is the journalist's task to let the interviewee tell his own story so that we as listeners, viewers or readers are able to form our own opinion about it? The interviewer's agenda has no place in this. It goes without saying that under the cloak of journalistic integrity, independence and objectivity everything is feasible. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand that. You gain real insight by being open to new information. Someone can be passive or active in it. The active approach is to ask yourself and others questions. If you ask yourself an open question, you activate your intuition. If you ask an open question to inform yourself about what you do not (yet) know (for sure) about something or someone, you limit the risk of making mistakes or making a decision that is subsequently experienced as undesirable. Here the rule applies: 'measure is to know'. If you really know what is going on or what is going on with someone else, then you are able to make the right choice for yourself at that moment. Asking questions and listening are inextricably linked. Listening is an art. Nothing is easier to think about the reaction you are going to give to the other during the other person's answer. This has nothing to do with listening, but more with 'wanting to be right'. This is ego driven behaviour. Communicating is not a cockfight. In fact, a good conversation consists of 80% listening. Actual listening is listening with full attention, i.e. with omission of judgment, hearing what someone is really saying. This listening also translates into reading other people's body language. The so-called non-verbal communication. Are you then still able to



ask a follow-up question based on what you hear, such as: 'What exactly do you mean when you say that you (...)?' or 'How did you come to that insight?', then suddenly you are in the middle of a conversation where the exchange of knowledge and experience takes place. Having a good conversation has to do with equal communication. This happens when the interlocutors are able and willing to ask each other open questions and listen attentively to the other person. This happens without the need to convince the other of anything. A good conversation, where the judgement or the 'Yes, but ...' has been omitted, almost automatically leads to progressive insight in each of the persons involved. This does not always have to be substantive. Sometimes it's enough to find out how someone thinks or feels about certain affairs.