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### **The Inquisitive Use of Rhetorical Questions in Darwin's *The Origin of Species***

The work of Charles Darwin has been viewed as controversial from the time it was conceived and later published to now from professional scientific discussions to highschool classrooms. For a closer look, in Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, he introduces the theory of how populations evolve over the course of generations through a process of natural selection and how evolution explains life's diversity and unity. Information like this was highly controversial at the time of Darwin's career due to the social context. This theory of evolution was combatant with the religious society and strong union between church and state. With such disputable content, Darwin's writing acts as a tool for opening minds and persuasion. More specifically, the use of rhetorical questions in this text ironically creates a sense of certainty and credibility of the material. He sets up a question just to answer it later with his research.

Though it is clear that Darwin has some level of confidence in the theory of evolution hence the existence of this book. But the use of a rhetorical question poses an opportunity to present the material confidently. "Who can explain why one species ranges widely and is very numerous, and why another allied species has a narrow range and is rare? Yet these relations are of the highest importance, for they determine the present welfare, and, as I believe, the future success and modification of every inhabitant of this world" (Darwin 8). Using this device is a good introduction to engage the audience into a new topic. "I am convinced that Natural Selection has been the main but not exclusive means of modification" (Darwin 8). With the question, there is a clear space for him to elaborate and answer that question.

While discussing the originality of breeds from years ago, Darwin has a claim to make but chooses to set up a question just for him to answer it after a couple sentences. “Even if this latter fact were found more strictly and generally true than seems to me to be the case, what does it show, but that some of our breeds originated there, four or five thousand years ago?” (Darwin 13) Opposite to the last quoted question, this one has more of a sarcastic tone implying that “this is simply wrong, let me tell you what's right.” This implication is clear due to his clear and concise answer. “I think it highly probable that our domestic dogs have descended from several wild species. In regard to sheep and goats I can form no opinion” (Darwin 13).

The use of rhetorical questions in Darwin's *The Origin of Species* is a method of audience engagement used to open minds and persuade the audience to listen and understand his “outlandish” theories of the time. In a scientific text like this, the frequent use of rhetorical questions isn't necessary but in Darwin's case it is and definitely enhances the feel of the text. Darwin uses this device many times throughout this text and everytime it seems to be used as a segue for his ideas to present confidently and comprehensively.

### **Work Cited**

Darwin, Charles. *The Origin of Species*. Vliz.Be.

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