

# EDITORIAL

## PUZZLES

Recently a member of our Institute received a jigsaw puzzle as a gift. This puzzle was somewhat different from the ordinary dime-store variety in that the cutting process produced tessellated pieces, i.e., pieces exactly the same shape and size. These identically shaped pieces are completely interchangeable with any other piece and, additionally, each can be rotated so that it will fit another piece in any one of three interlocking configurations. As a result it is a trivial task to put the puzzle together if the only goal intended is for the pieces to fit. However, the picture formed under such random conditions would not be intelligible. In order to arrive at a proper reconstruction, only the picture represented on the individual pieces can receive consideration, for the *shape* of the pieces cannot aid in its reassembling.

While musing over the construction of the puzzle, I was struck with a possible insight into the conflict between scientists who hold respective sides in the creation/evolution controversy. Using the puzzle as a metaphor, consider the following. Let individual data points represent a tessellated puzzle piece. Small collections of these pieces may be combined into a small picture which could describe a biochemical pathway, a physical process, or some ecological parameters. Continuing with the first example, large metabolic maps would represent collections of smaller groupings. But even these larger collections can be further combined with other large collections and become descriptions of organ systems or other complex physiological processes. Further collections at this level will produce descriptions of the organism and how it reacts with the surrounding environment. The process of science spends most of its time at this level of puzzle solving.

While for a time the above process is satisfying, eventually higher levels of synthesis are sought. As more and more complete descriptions of organisms are developed, unifying principles are sought to contain them. Somewhere at the higher levels of synthesis the concept of meaning begins to appear. It is at this level where the creationist and evolutionist diverge. These two groups seldom if ever disagree on data; it is the larger synthesis and meaning that brings the problems. But why do problems begin only at the highest level of the puzzle? It would seem that the larger the sections of the puzzle assembled, the easier it would be to complete the rest of the picture. Alas, such is not the case.

Perhaps the protagonists in the creation/evolution controversy have not understood how the puzzle of origins is constructed and as a result are not playing by the same rules for putting the picture together. Puzzles usually come in containers which depict the completed picture on the outside. But in the puzzle of origins neither creationists nor evolutionists have seen the picture on the box that the puzzle came in. No human eye-witnesses were there when it all began, although creationists claim valid historical documents that do

describe the event in sparse outline, and both groups are aware that a large number of the pieces are still missing or even lost.

How then shall the puzzle be constructed? To produce a picture at the meaning level can be done only by patterning it after one's world view — the composite of all one's acquired knowledge and experiences. It is a fiction of the darkest hue to believe that we can divorce ourselves from the persons we are and in an undetached manner observe our surroundings and come up with an accurate rendition of the world about us. The rational person continually searches for meaning in his surroundings. To give up this search is to become insane.

The fundamental difference between the creationist and evolutionist is that the former includes some pieces which reputedly have on them partial pictures of God. The latter group rejects these as not being important to their construction and therefore ignores them or may even deny their existence. If such God-pieces are accepted they are said to belong to a totally separate puzzle. Thus the source of the argument is seen. The creationists' world view says there is only one puzzle and that all the pieces found from whatever source fit somewhere in the picture. The evolutionist says there could be separate unrelated puzzles and that one cannot mix puzzles in order to get a completed picture.

Unfortunately, the end result is that it becomes futile to argue over the drastically conflicting pictures that are being produced. Large numbers of pieces fit together in both pictures and both groups of puzzle makers claim great beauty and symmetry. Each group recognizes incompleteness where certain areas of the puzzle are dissonant with the overall picture being produced.

This line of discussion might logically lead to the question, "What is the justification for creation-oriented research?" If minds cannot be changed, is it not futile to present data in the face of the opposition? One answer is that research can serve by offering alternative solutions to those who are still undecided on the question of origins. But there is a deeper philosophical purpose as well. One's world view is not static and continually changes (i.e., expands) with new information and experiences. Major shifts in thought occur when the level of dissonance surrounding a particular area becomes too great. Further research functions by providing carefully proposed scientific models which will create such dissonance and thus cause a person to question whether a naturalistic view is adequate.

Richard D. Tkachuck