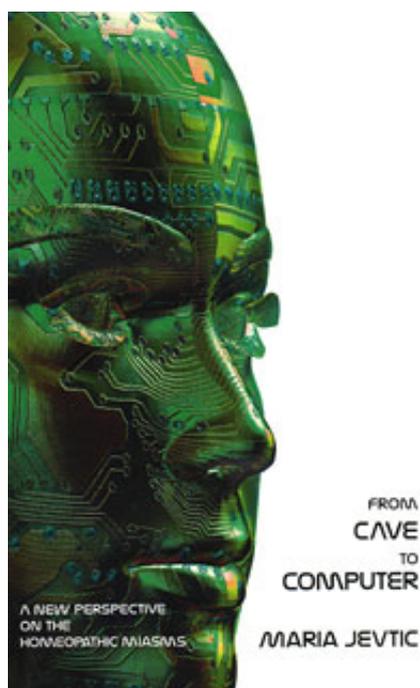


Maria Jevtic

From Cave to Computer

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Urbanisation

6,000 years ago first cities had been established in the Middle East. These were large settlements built from stone buildings surrounded by strong walls to protect from attacks by nomadic tribes or other urban societies. The Old Testament is full of stories involving various urban settlements and our museums are well equipped with numerous artefacts and even parts of buildings bearing witness to early urban societies. Why these urban societies evolved exactly where they did has remained subject of much speculation.

What seems to have been accepted is that to support the population of such a city, a certain density of population in the surrounding countryside was required, as otherwise transport of daily provisions would have taken too long. After all, it was the local countryside population who was producing food for city dwellers.

By the same logic it is almost certain that large-scale hunter-gathering would have been out of fashion for many millennia and that agriculture and animal husbandry had been the norm for a long time. Obviously, hunting would not have produced enough provisions for a concentrated settlement of tens of thousands of people on a daily basis.

In our story of chronic disease and social evolution, urbanisation was the next step forward for society, but brought with it a further blow to our health. This is because it automatically divided the human species into those "providing" and those "provided for". Why would this matter?

To Have or To Have Not

For first city dwellers the question was not one of survival, but one of establishing themselves amongst the lucky few who could subsist on activities as far removed from physical labour as possible. This was the next step forward on the ladder of social evolution and brought about a class system or division between poor and rich. Obviously there had been poorer and richer and more junior and more senior nomads and settlers within each community, but urbanisation produced socially and miasmatically significant extremes way beyond what had existed before.

How did all this come about?

Cities probably arose out of the phenomena of trade and commerce. Nomads had been trading in food and goods for some time and trading routes were well established. Settlers welcomed friendly nomads, and mutually beneficial relationships were formed. Those settlements on well-trodden trade routes, near inexhaustible water sources and with better soil quality in the immediate environment did better than others. They soon expanded as nomads needed space to stay over night and had to make payments for this. Thus some settlers - and in turn nomads - were able to amass possessions beyond immediate need.

Over the centuries, man began exchanging goods and foods not just for immediate consumption, nor just to secure bare survival in the near future, but simply because he could. Underneath he still did it to satisfy his chronic survival anxiety that remained with him to this day, but on the surface he acquired far more than was useful or than he would ever need.

In addition, exchange of labour against goods was introduced and at some point money was invented. This was most significant in the evolution of society and miasms. It was now possible to divide labour beyond the division between husband and wife. Some people could cease growing crops or keeping animals and could do something they were perhaps more suited to or that they thought would bring them an easier life.

Class Society

The more Psoric individual had already begun shifting some of his energy into the realms of the mind. But now he could stop physical labour altogether and use his mental capacity to earn his living. This was timely as these newly emerging large settlements of very permanent nature needed to achieve some degree of organisation beyond a circle of elders sitting around a fire in the evenings. New professions such as teachers, scribes, lawyers, secretaries, town officials, and doctors emerged providing urban society with a rich variety of occupations and ways to gain respect.

Other individuals, of Psoric or Tubercular nature, adapted to urban life by establishing themselves in crafts such as carpentry, pottery and tailoring. They began exchanging food for their goods or later asked for money. In this way they supported the needs of the other urban dwellers whilst securing their own income.

A third group, probably the more Tubercular type, perhaps through sheer luck or by being quicker in recognising opportunities in these early days, began engaging in trade on a big scale. Strategic marriages and hierarchical command structures amongst and within trading clans/families



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