

## **Birth and Zoological Structure of the Noosphere: Segment 1**

**Terrence Deacon:** I think it's important to recognize that we depend on each other in a number of ways that are not characteristic of chimpanzees, or for that matter any other species. And it's not only because of our need to forage collectively, in fact to become foragers using stone tools and carcasses as a source of food, in our ancient australopithecine and homo ancestors. We also need to pass that capacity on. And need to pass on the capacity to coordinate as well as make these tools, to coordinate our activities, our foraging activities together.

My own view of this is that it requires the beginnings of something that today we would recognize as language—communicating symbolically. The critical difference here is that an individual can't do this. This is a collective capacity. We acquire our ability to speak, and communicate, and understand each other because we're in a social group. But that means we're also, for this capacity, dependent on the continuity of that social group. If that social group falls apart, of course, we don't have that capacity any more, any of those capacities. They come with symbolic communication, including our ability to talk about the future, to make plans, and agreements and so on. All of this disappears.

In this respect I like to think of ourselves as a little bit like obligate endosymbionts. We're endosymbionts in a culture and a society, in which we depend upon this larger host. Without being in that larger host, we don't persist. That means we also have to find ways to protect the persistence of that larger host. Each individual has a role to play in maintaining the persistence of this larger entity that we call a culture or a social group, that shares this communicative capacity.

So I actually think that the evolution that drew us so far away from other species in our sociality has to do also with our collective thinking process that symbols provide for us. That is the thoughts I have are thoughts I've inherited from each of you, to some extent, but also from people as distant as Aristotle and Descartes, and Hobbes and so on, in our past. These thoughts are my thoughts, and that we are, in that respect, really integrated with this larger host, a host that is bigger than even the current population, that extends in history and space.

And my view is that this is the beginning, already, of the Noosphere. The Noosphere is this sort of larger entity, and I think that we've been obligate symbionts in this larger entity since the beginning of symbolic communication.