

## Evolution of the mind: How termite colonies are models of the human brain

*[Editor's note: Excerpts from an interview with Daniel Dennett, cognitive scientist and philosopher at Tufts University, who recently wrote *From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds*.]*

[E]volution by natural selection is a process that's breathtakingly competent, but has no understanding at all. Yet it has given humans the ability to reason, to understand...[W]e are using [these tools] to achieve kinds of comprehension that no other species has.

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Contrast a termite castle with Antoni Gaudí's wonderful church in Barcelona, [La Sagrada Familia](#). They look similar, but Gaudí's church is a product of intelligent design; it's top-down, with a charismatic boss who thought it out in advance. [The question is: How did humans go from termite-style building to Gaudí-style building?]



On the left is a termite mound, and on the right is La Sagrada Familia. Unlike the termite mound, the church was built with a plan in mind. The evolution of how we think is like moving from the mound to the church.

[I]t's particularly thorny when you recognize that what we have between our ears is more like a termite colony...The latest count is 86 billion neurons, each more clueless than a termite, with no boss. How on earth do you organize 86 billion neurons into Gaudí's mind? That's the puzzle.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Why your brain is like a conscious termite colony](#)