Exercise: Is an Ant Hill Intelligent?

argue for and against the intelligence of the ant hill

• You run across an ant hill and are giving it a wide berth when you see the ants are doing something strange. After a moment, you realize that they are forming words with their bodies. When you write something in the dirt, they trace across the pattern to "read" it and respond to you in turn. With time, you form a friendship with the ant hill, and the two (million and one?) of you write a hit Broadway musical together. Over the years you know the hill, you notice that individual ants from the hill or even small groups seem to exhibit no ability to communicate.

• Are the ants intelligent?
• Is the hill intelligent?

based on a story in Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid