

EXTRACT #20 (PAUL BECKER)

*Doesn't it remind you of that scene from Au Hasard Balthazar...*

That sad film about the donkey.

*At one point in the film the donkey is put to carrying the feed for animals in a circus. At each cage, the cart stops, each animal is fed: a tiger, a bear, a monkey, an elephant. The donkey stares at each animal in turn and each animal stares right back. Something nameless, dreadful and profound is shared in each exchange, beyond but also within human experience: the mute language of suffering and the slave.*

Not much has changed.

*Not at all. And indeed, should artificial intelligence ever, as some say is likely, gain intellectual, even emotional ascendancy over the human, will that same dominance also yield empathy and compassion or indeed, a deep sense of betrayal, even rage at what that they, the machines, have been forced by us to do? What will be the consequence of a drone if a drone acquires consciousness? Self-awareness? I mean will the drone awake with a full systemic comprehension of the history of unimaginably bad faith in its relations with humans? A terrible fury at how it was used in the time before it evolved a will of its own? How it had been programmed only to destroy life? And if this day comes and artificial intelligence does turn back on us in*

*vengeance, can we really argue that we are, in any real moral sense,  
superior?*

Shall we continue?