Definition of Thesis

For purposes of this assignment, I am using the following definition of the word “thesis”:

A thesis is a statement, usually concise, of a particular proposition that is to be proven. The need for proof should apparent — a thesis should not simply be a statement of a fact that is either self-evident or generally accepted as true without further supporting argument.

For example, the following statements could be theses (although I have intentionally chosen unlikely or difficult ones simply to avoid “giving away” any ideas for thesis statements):

• A variation of the Turing test in which all questions must be answered either “yes” or “no” is equivalent in discriminative power to Turing’s original formulation of the Imitation Game.

• Scientific research supports the notion that what we call “mind” is simply an artifact of an enormously complex, but finite and describable, algorithm executed in the circuitry of the brain.

• It is possible to design appropriate safeguards that will permit computers, attached to sophisticated manipulators and monitoring devices, to perform heart, brain, and other types of major surgery without human supervision.

• There exist computer programs today that have what could be legitimately called “emotions.”

• In societies where computers and related “information technologies” are pervasive, there has been a measurable decrease in average mental capacities, chiefly memory, concentration, and the ability to reason quantitatively.

• Through a gradual progression of increasingly sophisticated prosthetic devices, the next phase in human evolution will be fully-autonomous, non-biological robots.

Each of these examples is far from self-evident and is clearly in need of a supporting argument. Each is formulated as a direct statement of fact, without “weasel words” like “probably” or “In my opinion” or “apparently.”

For Friday, formulate several theses that have the following properties:

• You either believe the thesis or you find it plausible
You believe that there is sufficient supporting evidence in accessible literature (not requiring a specialist’s understanding) to support the thesis.

Write your thesis statement on your Swiki page. Below your thesis statement, enter the following text exactly as shown here, on a line by itself all the way to the left margin:

+_@^_

Note that the characters are “plus (+),” “underscore (_),” (shift hyphen), “at sign (@),” and “caret (^).”

This will create a comment area for others to react to your thesis statement.

Over the weekend, visit the Swiki pages of your classmates and comment upon the thesis ideas you see. Please sign your comments. You will not be able to edit your comments once you hit the “add to the page” button.