'Even if computers become self-aware, they will never have anything like human souls.' Discuss.

In order to discuss this topic, I must obtain definitions for the words "computer", "self-aware", and "soul". This is so that I can build my arguments upon a stable base. These definitions have been gathered from 'The Oxford Paperback Dictionary & Thesaurus'.

- **Computer** – *electronic device for storing and processing data, making calculations, or controlling machinery.*
- **Self** – *automatic*
- **Aware** – *conscious, having knowledge*
- Therefore **Self-Aware** – *automatically conscious*
- **Soul** – spiritual or immaterial part of a person.

From this definition of soul, it is obvious that computers have to become a person to have a soul, and this is impossible as (by definition) a person is a human being, and cannot be anything else. However, maybe it is possible for a computer to acquire something very similar to a soul. For example, a computer may be able to have feelings, emotions, consciousness, opinions and other characteristics of human's with souls. These abilities in a computer are known as **A.I.** (artificial intelligence).

This seems impossible with the computers of this day and age, however, if one follows the drastic improvement in technology over the last century, one can see that what we know as standard now was inconceivable years ago. What we call a "computer" (like the one this has been written on) would have been something science fiction in the beginning of the 20th Century. Therefore, it is obvious that there is tremendous scope for computers to become a lot more improved in the future. They may even gain some if not total A.I. This implies that a computer could obtain all the intelligence of a human being if not more.

The statement I am discussing asserts that even if computers become conscious, they will never have a spiritual or immaterial part to them. This is blatantly true, as we (the creators of computers) know that we have and will have only built them out of materials. I believe that we will not have the ability to insert a spiritual side into a computer within the same time-span that we will have the ability to give computers A.I.

However, maybe computers can acquire A.I., and maybe this is the next best thing to a soul. After all, we have no proof that we (humans) have souls; this is just a religious belief that we have faith in. Therefore, it is probable (from an atheistic point of view) that we are just advanced computers. The only difference is that we are made of biological materials, which are a lot more complex than the materials used in a computer. These may have a capacity, unknown to humans and incapable of other materials, to have souls. On the other hand, there are biological life forms (i.e. plants), which we believe not to have souls.

Science has shown that humans have evolved over years, from animals like apes, and originally from organisms like bacteria. If this is true, then it shows that humans were once creatures without intelligence – that is just something we have achieved through evolution. Then surely, when computers gain the ability to make

decisions, they will be able to improve themselves and in a virtual evolution improve and improve over time, becoming more and more lifelike?

It is also possible that computers already have minds. The '**qualia**' problem suggests that we cannot determine whether something has a mind or is conscious merely by the way it acts. Just because a computer seems to be a slave to us, doing exactly what we tell it to do when we press buttons, does that necessarily mean that this is all it is capable off? Or even all that is does? A computer obviously does a lot more than we know, as it already has vague forms of artificial intelligence. A lot of standard software has assistants with A.I. in order to assist and help us.

Sony has released a product called "AIBO". This is a cute electronic pet, which is very friendly and has the ability to learn