

Congressman Beats Super-Computer

Michael Sean Winters | Mar. 2, 2011 Distinctly Catholic

Mark Twain famously wrote: "Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself."

Well, Congressman Rush Holt of New Jersey is no idiot. He beat Watson, the super-computer in a round of jeopardy.

More tellingly, Holt tried to make Chris Matthews grasp his point that computers will never have certain human capabilities, that computers cannot develop wisdom, that they cannot appreciate nuances we humans grasp, that they cannot assess the different weight to be afforded competing interests, etc., a point that Matthews had trouble with. The video is below.

Here is another way to make the point that Holt was making. A computer cannot make a period at the end of a sentence; It can only make a dot. A computer cannot know that the period is related to the capital letter at the beginning of the sentence or, in the case of e.e. cummings, that it is not so related.

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