Opinion



by Michael Sean Winters

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At the Atlantic, Garrett Epps looks at another of the interesting amicus curiae briefs in the *Janus* v. *AFSCME* case, from conservative legal scholars Eugene Volokh, best known as the founder of the blog the Volokh Conspiracy blog, and the University of Chicago's William Baude. They think there is no constitutional issue at all, which goes further than current case law. I am not sure they are right, but I hope they are persuasive.

And, for those who think the church's commitment to organized labor can be discarded, here is a link to Cardinal Donald Wuerl's keynote address at the second "Erroneous Autonomy" conference, held at the headquarters of the AFL-CIO. The other night, I was speaking with Stephen Schneck, former director of the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies. We had worked together on those three erroneous autonomy events, and I told him that if we had done nothing else at the institute, those three conferences justified all of our work — and we did much else as well.

If Glenn Kessler, the Washington Post's fact-checker, were a stock, his price would be through the roof in this presidency. Here he checks out the president's latest tweet-storm.

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Free the world of art! Two recent items caught my eye that show how our contemporary culture seeks to make art conform, and one shows a true artist calling it out. The first was all the brouhaha about Kehinde Wiley, the artist who painted the official portrait of President Barack Obama. The concern was about his previous work, which kept people from asking the important question: Is his painting of Obama good? I thought it was brilliant. The second item is a video of a master class with Metropolitan Opera star Keith Miller. He starts with what I feared was psychobabble, but then he engages the first singer and asks what he is feeling. The young man responds, "Me personally?" Miller responds: "Is there a difference?" Bingo. Why do people think they need to cushion an articulation of their opinion? It only creates the impression that an opinion is like a second-hand sweater, something that can be tossed away without another thought. In an effort to appear sociable — "well, it's just my opinion but…" — people are in fact telling their interlocutor that they do not care enough about the issue, or about the interlocutor, to offer a considered response, one they are willing to own. Bravo to Miller for calling it out and helping this student aspire to artistry that must always, always be true if it is to be great, no matter where the chips fall.

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

Editor's note: Don't miss out on Michael Sean Winters' latest: Sign up to receive free newsletters, and we'll notify you when he publishes new Distinctly Catholic columns.

Tweet that Glenn Kessler fact-checked for The Washington Post