So because I'm just getting started on these regular Musings, I was planning on putting my basic philosophy and beliefs down here. Just so you all could understand me a bit better. Trouble is, something happened yesterday that jumps the line a bit.

I read a story in the news about the Centner Academy, a Miami private school started in 2020. Apparently they won't let their staff teach any of the kids, if those teachers have been vaccinated. Lemme repeat that: if those teachers have gotten a vaccine shot, they aren't allowed to teach there.

I studied to be a teacher when I was younger, and the story caught my attention for that reason. I didn't pay it much mind, though. There are much bigger stories on the news, and I had my own problems to worry about.

Then I saw a memo at work just a few hours later, insisting that all of us sign and date a disclosure form. We're supposed to tell our employers our vaccination status, and that information will be used to determine our suitability to work at various locations.

Ok, things just got very real. The form didn't say which direction our employer was leaning! Do my bosses want me to be vaccinated, or want me to be unvaccinated? If I sign that form, and tell them my status, I'll be 'taking a side' as it were. None of my co-workers knew which one our bosses wanted either. As long as I didn't sign the form, I was safe in Schrödinger's box with his cat. The moment I signed it, the box opened, and I was either fired or employed.

Of course they wouldn't call it fired. They'd call it 'reassigned', or 'let go', or 'furloughed' or whatever. That's one of the many problems in our society. Euphemisms replace not just ordinary language, but decency itself.

For eight hours on my shift I was safe, but in conflict. Should I refuse to sign the form? I need this job. I actually *like* this job! It's a far cry from the kinds of work I did in the past. And writing certainly doesn't pay the bills yet. If it ever will.

Just so you know, I'm not going to disclose my vaccination status to you. This is about my situation at work. I don't want you to think I'm taking sides on this issue. I definitely have an opinion (I have a lot of those), but I'm not going to champion it now.

Anyway, if I refused, would others stand up with me? We work for a private company. They can fire us without any reason given at all. Unless enough people decided to stand with me, I could be axed by the next day!

Fortunately for some of us, the decision became a lot easier in hour seven. A slightly-better-informed employee came in for his shift, and proudly presented his own vaccination card, along with another memo sent to him and the other supervisors. The company definitely wanted us to be vaccinated. It was no longer a matter of guessing at their motivations, and hoping I jumped in the right direction.

On the surface, I get the impulse. People want to save lives, in most cases. A firefighter runs into a burning building for that reason. A doctor opens up patients for that reason. Soldiers often have that reason (if sometimes mixed up with other reasons for wanting to fight). Even extremist groups view their actions as necessary to save their lives and the lives of their people! From ISIS fighters to white supremacists- some of them truly believe that they're saving lives. The right kinds of lives, they admit, but still lives.

But who decides if those lives deserve to be saved? Who decides *whose* lives get to be saved? My company is run by individuals, and I know none of them personally. The home office is in another state I've never even visited! For all I know, their views are so ridiculously opposed to mine that if I ever met them, I'd feel sick just listening to them talk! Or they could be like-minded to me. They could share all of my views (none of which I plan to share now), and I could feel truly at home listening to them.

Whether or not I have a job is kind of important. I need money to buy the things I need to survive. If I lose my job, it should be because I can't do the job. Right? I should be incompetent, or lazy, or emotionally volatile and disruptive to my co-workers. Or a threat to their health (which is why I get the earlier impulse). My superiors at work clearly believe that by requiring all their employees to be vaccinated, they're saving lives.

But those teachers in Miami were prevented from teaching because the owners of the Centner Academy had the exact same desire! The Centners *believe* that they are protecting their staff and schoolkids, by preventing vaccinated people from working there!

Whether or not your boss' beliefs should dictate your employment with them is debatable. But when that employment is necessary for your *survival*, it stops being a matter for discussion!

The crusades were about belief, and a lot of people didn't survive because of them. Manifest destiny was about belief, and a lot of people didn't survive because of it. The holocaust was about belief as well.. you get the picture.

*Breathes heavily and angrily for a minute*.

Most of the time I think about big philosophical questions. Why are we here, what is our purpose, what are our responsibilities to ourselves and others- that sort of thing. This situation forced me to think on a much, much smaller scale. It made me think about me and my own life. My employment. Possibly my survival.

It's one thing to try and answer the big questions, but when it comes down to it, all we have are our lives. What's the point in living at all, if we don't value our lives or those of other people?