Article

Trauma and the Emergence of Spiritual Potentiality in Ibn 'Arabī's Metaphysics

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Abstract: Spirituality has been proven in recent studies to be a key contributor in posttraumatic growth. One of the most well-known mystical thinkers in Islam, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī (d. 634/1240), nevertheless, believes that trauma does not facilitate spiritual growth, but rather has the capacity to reveal the spiritual potentiality that was latent within a person. This paper begins by exploring the concept of trauma in the Qur'an and how it may actualise the potentiality of humans. It then scrutinises Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of human potentiality or 'preparedness' (*istiʿdād*) and how its actualisation leads to the rank of the Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-kāmil*). Finally, it adduces two examples (Mūsā and Yūnus) in whom traumatic experiences result in posttraumatic growth and the actualisation of their spiritual potentialities. In the case of the former, it is posttraumatic growth through preservation of the self; for the latter, it is posttraumatic growth through preservation of others.

Keywords: spirituality; trauma; Islam; Ibn 'Arabī; prophets; potentiality; Mūsā; Yūnus

1. Introduction

This paper explores the role of spirituality in posttraumatic growth in Islamic mysticism. 'Spirituality', nevertheless, is not a term that is easily defined. Indeed, Elkins et al. (2016) aver that there is no agreed-upon definition of spirituality. Lawrence Lapierre (1994) constructed a six-part model for describing spirituality in an attempt to delineate the main facets of it. For the purposes of this paper, spirituality is identified with mysticism within the Islamic context, and refers to a general outlook in which the inner aspect of religion is emphasised, as opposed to merely its outer manifestation (Lala 2019 book). The caveat of 'within the Islamic tradition' is a key one because, as Gershom Scholem notes, the spirituality of each religious tradition is unique to that tradition and is an expression of all the theological minutiae that constitute it (Scholem 1995, p. 26). This study aims to investigate the concept of posttraumatic growth in the mystical tradition of Islam through the works of arguably the most important mystical theorist in the Muslim tradition, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī (d. 634/1240) (Addas 1993; Hirtenstein 1999; Knysh 1999; Lipton 2018). In so doing, it will add to the existing literature on posttraumatic growth by interrogating it through the lens of Islamic mysticism.

2. Methodology

In order to achieve the aforementioned objective, an overview of the current literature on posttraumatic growth is first presented; this includes the definition of the term as well as its major domains. After this, the concepts of trauma and posttraumatic growth in the Islamic tradition are introduced through references to them in the Qur'an and the mystical exegetic tradition. Subsequent to this introduction, more detailed analysis of posttraumatic growth in the works of Ibn 'Arabī is conducted through his conception of human 'preparedness' (*istiʿdād*) and how the actualisation of this preparedness allows for the elevation of humans to the rank of the Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-kāmil*). Finally, two examples of prophets (Mūsā and Yūnus) in whom traumatic experiences, according to Ibn

'Arabī, result in posttraumatic growth and the actualisation of their spiritual potentialities are adduced. In the case of the former, it is posttraumatic growth through preservation of the self; for the latter, it is posttraumatic growth through preservation of others. Through close textual analysis, first of the Qur'an and the mystical exegetic tradition, then of the works of Ibn 'Arabī, the concept of posttraumatic growth as it appears in these texts is allowed to emerge organically. Additionally, it is seen how Ibn 'Arabī's specialised understanding of posttraumatic growth as the actualisation of human spiritual potentiality correlates with the mystical exegetic tradition. This methodology enables the contemporary concept of posttraumatic growth to be connected to traditional texts in Islamic mysticism and allows these texts, and the ideas they contain, to become relevant for Muslims in the modern age: How can the traumas experienced by Mūsā and Yūnus resonate with Muslims who have experienced traumas in our time, and what can we learn from the reactions of these prophets to trauma? The exploration of these questions within the framework of Ibn 'Arabī's mysticism allows this study to make a unique contribution to the literature on this topic.

3. Overview of Literature on Posttraumatic Growth

'The frightening and confusing aftermath of trauma', write Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004, p. 1), 'where fundamental assumptions are severely challenged, can be fertile ground for unexpected outcomes that can be observed in survivors: posttraumatic growth'. Posttraumatic growth, then, is the positive change that a person experiences after a major negative life-event (Tedeschi 1999). Numerous studies report posttraumatic growth in individuals who have survived different types of trauma, from health-related trauma (Taylor 1983; Affleck et al. 1987; Collins et al. 1990; Schwartzberg 1994; Stanton and Low 2004) to sexual trauma (Silver et al. 1983; Veronen and Kilpatrick 1983; Burt and Katz 1987; O'Leary and Gould 2010), and from natural disasters (Thompson 1985; Kilmer and Gil-Rivas 2010) to human-inflicted suffering (Sledge et al. 1980; Kahana 1992; Ai et al. 2005; Shasha-Rubinstein et al. 2015; Mark et al. 2018), in addition to the loss of loved ones (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1989–1990; Schwartzberg and Janoff-Bulman 1991; Bray 2013; López et al. 2015).

Tedeschi and Calhoun write that these groups reported 'perceived changes' in themselves, such as emotional growth, increased resilience, and increased self-reliance (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996, p. 456). The relationships of survivors with others also improved as these people were more cognisant of just how important family members and friends were, and understanding of self-worth and sensitivity to others increased (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996, pp. 456–57). Finally, there was a general change in the 'philosophy of life' for these individuals, who no longer took life for granted, and rearranged their priorities in order to live their lives to the fullest (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996, pp. 457–58). A concomitant surge in spirituality was also detected with this new appreciation of life (McCullough et al. 2000; Pargament 2001; Mattis 2002; Cadell et al. 2003; Hill and Pargament 2003; Peterson and Seligman 2004; Ai and Park 2005), because 'spirituality is an extension of worldview, coping, and meaning making, and is an essential component in healthy posttraumatic processing' (Vis and Boynton 2008, p. 70). This is why religious coping, specifically (Proffitt et al. 2007), has been shown to lead to 'anxiety reduction, self-development, and personal control' (Pargament 2002, p. 49), and because 'higher levels of religious involvement are associated with greater well-being and mental health' (Peres et al. 2007, p. 347).[1]

Calhoun and Tedeschi refined these overall aspects of posttraumatic growth into a pentpartite system that has exerted an abiding influence on the field (Aldwin and Levenson 2004; Stanton and Low 2004). These domains of posttraumatic growth are:

1. 'A greater appreciation of life and changed sense of priorities';
2. 'Warmer, more intimate relationships with others';
3. 'A greater sense of personal strength';
4. 'Recognition of new possibilities or paths for one's life';
5. 'Spiritual development' (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, p. 6).

Although others have argued that this list is not exhaustive, they nevertheless concede that it encapsulates the major domains of posttraumatic growth (Aldwin and Levenson 2004; McMillen 2004, p. 51). This is because seismic traumatic events disrupt human worldviews (Janoff-Bulman and Frantz 1997; Tedeschi et al. 1998; Janoff-Bulman 2002; Park and Ai 2006), thereby rendering the 'pre-existing worldview . . . no longer viable posttrauma' (Vis and Boynton 2008, p. 72).

The present article shows how Ibn ʾArabī believes the trials and tribulations faced by prophets mentioned in the Qurʾan unleash the latent spiritual potentiality in them because they rely on the support systems that are provided by God. The prophets undergo the same evolution that Calhoun and Tedeschi delineate, but this is nothing more than a realisation of their innate, theretofore unfulfilled, spiritual potentiality. The Qurʾan, intimates Ibn ʾArabī, articulates these vignettes of prophetic tribulations in order for believers to comprehend that their own latent potentiality may, likewise, be realised though growth after traumatic events.

4. Trauma in the Qurʾan

Ibn ʾArabī's assertion that trauma has the capacity to actualise the latent spiritual potentiality of humankind[2] has a Qurʾanic foundation, as does much of his metaphysical *weltanschauung*. Indeed, Ronald Nettler argues that, for Ibn ʾArabī, 'the metaphysics clearly *is* the meaning of the Qurʾan' (Nettler 2012, p. 14). Ibn ʾArabī believes that his claim lays bare the inner meaning of the Qurʾan because in it God declares that '*God does not task a soul beyond its capacity*' (Qurʾan 2:286).[3] For the renowned Muʿtazilite linguist and exegete, Abuʾl-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) (Ibrahim and Ibrahim 1980), this refers to the religious obligations God places upon humans:

> [A person] is not tasked with anything except that they have sufficient ability (*ṭawq*) to carry it out, and it is easily done (*yatasayyar*) by them, without going to the limit (*madā*) of their capability and exertion. So this is informing [the believer] of His justice (*ʿadl*) and His mercy (*raḥma*), like His saying, '*God desires for you ease*', because it is possible for humans to be able to pray more than five [times a day], and to fast for more than a month, and to perform more than one pilgrimage. (Al-Zamakhsharī 1987, vol. 1, p. 332)

Al-Zamakhsharī is of the opinion that this verse refers only to the religious obligations that are imposed upon believers. Not only does God not impose obligations that humans are incapable of bearing, says al-Zamakhsharī, but, due to His mercy, He does not even impose obligations that would be difficult for humans to carry out. This is because humans are fully capable of performing more than five prayers a day, or of fasting for more than a month, or of performing more than one pilgrimage in their lifetime. Al-Zamakhsharī does not extend his commentary to the traumas humans encounter in their lives. However, the eighteenth-century Moroccan exegete Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mahdī ibn ʾAjība (d. 1224/1809), who is known to have been influenced by Ibn ʾArabī, (Michon 2010), includes traumatic events experienced by people in his exegesis of this verse:

> It is understood from the secret of this verse that, if someone finds any matter oppressive (*shaqq ʿalayh*), or a need compels them, or a hardship (*shidda*) or a tribulation (*baliyya*) afflicts them, then let them turn to God and let them fling themselves before their Lord, and let them believe that all matters are in His hands. For surely God, the Exalted, will not leave them without His help (*maʿūna*) and His support (*rafd*) so that that which has befallen them will be lightened for them, and that burden will be removed from them. And everyone who refers all matters to God, all their needs (*ḥawāʾij*) will be fulfilled by God; 'Of the signs (*ʿalāmāt*) of success (*najḥ*) at the end, is referring [the matter] to God in the beginning'. (Ibn ʾAjība 1998, vol. 1, p. 319)

Ibn ʾAjība explains that the secret meaning of this verse is that whenever one goes through a traumatic experience and turns to God, that tribulation and hardship is lightened

for them. In other words, the traumatic event can create the correct conditions for them to turn to God, and when they do, the external hardship is removed. This turning to God can take many forms: it may be the individual turning to God and becoming more cognisant of the providential care of the divine through remembrance of God (*dhikr*), or it may be that this turning to God is through becoming aware that the providential care of the divine is expressed through the support networks that are set up in order for the individual to grow following their trauma, whether this be through the support of family and friends, or the intimacy of the master–disciple (*shaykh-murīd*) relationship, or by turning to the 'Friends of God' (*awliyā' Allāh*). By turning to these support structures that are providentially provided, Ibn 'Ajība intimates that posttraumatic actualisation of spiritual power can occur, such that 'all their needs are fulfilled' so that the hardship no longer oppresses them because they have truly realised that 'all matters are in His hands'. In this case, the tribulation itself may not be removed, but due to the actualisation of their spiritual power, it no longer oppresses them in the way it did before. He concludes with an aphorism of the Medieval Maliki Mystic, Tāj al-Dīn ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh (d. 709/1310), that it is discernible whether the trauma will be beneficial or not by the immediate reaction of the person when they are subjected to it (Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh 2019).

One of the most influential sober mystics in the Islamic tradition, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072?) (Mojaddedi 2000; Knysh 2000; Knysh 2007; Nguyen 2012; Nguyen and Ingalls 2013), whose mystical commentary left an indelible effect on the exegetical tradition (Ahmad 1969; Keeler 2006; Sands 2006, 2013; Godlas 2013; Nguyen 2013), writes that because God tells the Prophet Muḥammad '*So surely with hardship (al-'usr) comes an ease (yusr). Surely with hardship (al-'usr) comes a[nother] ease (yusr)*' (Qur'an, 94:5–6), Muḥammad said, 'One form of hardship does not overpower two forms of ease (*yusrayn*)' (Al-Qushayrī n.d., vol. 3, p. 744). Al-Qushayrī explains that this means,

> [The term] 'hardship' (*al-'usr*), with the article, in both places is one because of the covenant ('*ahd*) [of prophethood], and [the term] 'ease' is indefinite (*munakkar*) in both places, so there are two sources [of it]. The one form of hardship is that which is in the world. As for the two forms of ease, one of them is in the world in terms of abundance (*khiṣb*) and the alleviation of trials, and the other is in the hereafter in terms of reward. Therefore, the source of hardship for all believers is one, and that is what afflicts them from the hardships of the world, and the sources of ease for them are two: today in terms of unveiling (*kashf*) and turning away (*ṣarf*), and tomorrow in terms of reward. (Al-Qushayrī n.d., vol. 3, p. 744)

Even though the verses refer specifically to the Prophet Muḥammad when he began his mission and was mercilessly persecuted by the tribes of Mecca (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, vol. 24, p. 495), the principle that one form of hardship is accompanied by two forms of ease is applicable to all believers. He explains that the source of hardship is one because it is mentioned with the definite article, whereas the source of ease is multiple because it is indefinite. The one source of hardship is what people encounter in the world in the form of traumatic events. The two sources of ease are (1) alleviation of that hardship in the world, and (2) reward for that hardship in the hereafter. Whilst the second form of ease is straightforward, al-Qushayrī's definition of the first form of ease requires some elaboration. Al-Qushyarī intimates that the alleviation of hardship from this world could be external, in the sense that the hardship is removed, or it could mean that posttraumatic actualisation of the person occurs through the support networks provided by God. This is betrayed by his definition of the source of ease in the world being 'unveiling (*kashf*) and turning away (*ṣarf*)' from the hardship. As mentioned, this 'turning away' from the hardship could entail a 'turning to' the support networks providentially put in place, such as personal remembrance of God, turning to family and friends, turning to one's spiritual master, or turning to the Friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*).

Al-Qushayrī's choice of 'unveiling' (*kashf*) for the reaction of a person to trauma is particularly telling, since this is the term used for the spiritual insight of gnostics when 'the veil (*ḥijāb*) is lifted and they have cognisance (*iṭṭilā'*) of everything behind it in terms

of the meanings and secrets [of things]' (Al-Ḥakīm 1981, p. 664). In the same way, then, as Ibn 'Ajība suggests, the potential 'benefit' of the trauma in this world is achieved not only through posttraumatic actualisation that profits a person in the hereafter, because they may have realised their spiritual potentiality by turning to the support networks God has provided; the hardship is also alleviated or lightened in this world because their posttraumatic actualisation allows them to seek the providentially set up support structures. Thus, even though the hardship may not be removed, it no longer afflicts them in the same way it did before.

In his commentary on Q2:286, Abu'l-Thanā' al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), arguably the foremost Ottoman exegete (Nafi 2002), and also an adherent of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings (Gökkır and Gökkır 2017), adopts an even more wide-ranging interpretation than Ibn 'Ajība when he says that a soul is not tasked with anything 'except that it is able to do it, and it is not onerous for it or for its preparedness (*isti'dād*) from the divine manifestations (*tajalliyāt*) that it has' (Al-Ālūsī 1994, vol. 2, p. 69). Al-Ālūsī elucidates that, because humankind has a preparedness, which is its capacity to manifest all the divine Names, nothing it is stricken with is onerous for it, nor is it unable to do any task. By drawing on the concept of preparedness, al-Ālūsī is alluding to one of the most fundamental terms in Ibn 'Arabī's mystical lexicon.

5. Ibn 'Arabī and Preparedness (*isti'dād*)

The concept of preparedness in Ibn 'Arabī's sufi lexicon is closely related to the potentiality of humankind in the sense that it determines the ultimate rank that humans attain (Lala 2019). Ibn 'Arabī writes that humans have the potentiality to manifest all the divine Names (see below). However, only those who have the preparedness to manifest all the Names actually manage to do so. This is because, as the important expositor of Ibn 'Arabī's mystical outlook, Nūr al-Dīn al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492) (Rizvi 2006), writes, 'manifestation of the [divine] essence is only in the form of . . . the servant, and according to his preparedness' (Al-Jāmī 2005, p. 85). The reason for this is that the preparedness is the receptacle that accepts the outpouring of God that imbues everything with existence, and the divine outpouring is thus determined by the receptacle. Al-Jāmī elaborates that the divine outpouring is

> coloured (*tanbasigh*) . . . according to the preparednesses (*isti'dādāt*), spiritual and natural ranks (*marātib rūḥāniyya wa ṭabī'iyya*), places and times, and dependencies (*tawābi'*) . . . of the receptacles. (Al-Jāmī 2005, p. 85)

Al-Jāmī recalls the language of the orthodox Sufi stalwart, Abū'l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910) (Abun-Nasr 2007, p. 37), who remarked that 'the water takes on the color of the cup' (Chittick 1994, p. 162). Thus, the unrestricted divine outpouring of God that imparts existence is 'constrained' by the preparedness, which gives rise to the different 'states' (*aḥwāl*) of humankind.

Ibn 'Arabī writes that there are two classes of people: 'the class who know, from what they get [from God], what their preparedness is, and the class who know from their preparedness what they will get [from God]' (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 59). The distinction between these two groups is clarified by the early modern poet and specialist in Ibn 'Arabī's mystical worldview, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731) (Lane 2001; Sukkar 2014, pp. 136–70), who explains that, for the first group,

> their knowledge of their preparedness is extracted from what they get [from God] because the branch (*far'*) of preparedness—and the existence of this branch—is proof of the existence of the root (*aṣl*). And the other class know from their preparedness, which they find within themselves, and which their luminous spiritual insights (*baṣā'ir al-munawwara*) unveil for them, what they accept from what God, the Exalted, gives them, so their knowledge of what they accept is extracted from their preparedness, inferring from the root, what the branch will be. (Al-Nābulusī 2008, vol. 1, p. 126)

The first group, therefore, figure out what their preparedness is from what happens to them in the world. The traumatic events that they are subjected to, and the support networks providentially provided that allow them to grow following these events, enable them to infer that they have an exalted preparedness and potentiality. The other group already know what their preparedness is; they have already established the support networks in the form of the remembrance of God, and deep connections to the Friends of God etc., that enable them to deal with traumatic events, knowing that, by turning to these networks, their preparedness can be actualised. Naturally, says Ibn 'Arabī, this second class has 'more perfect (*atamm*) . . . gnosis of preparedness' (*ma'rifat al-isti'dād*) (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 59) because it is already cognisant of its preparedness and does not have to figure it out from the trauma.

The notion that traumatic events have the capacity to actualise human potentiality may also be gleaned from Q2:30–34, in which God declares that He will appoint a vicegerent on earth. Upon hearing this, the angels ask why God would appoint a vicegerent who would '*cause sedition therein and spill blood*?' Their question was, in essence, out of a willingness to learn why those who would cause suffering, and suffer themselves, deserved the honour of being the vicegerent. To this, God responds that He knows that which the angels do not and He teaches Ādam the divine Names (see below). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 312/925?), who wrote one of the most important Ash'arite commentaries (Saeed 2018, p. xi), explains that it is precisely *because* humans cause suffering and suffer themselves that they are worthy of the title of 'vicegerent' (*khalīfa*) and they are able to learn the divine Names. The angels, who do not have the inclination to cause sedition and spill blood, therefore do not suffer and are precluded from learning the divine Names (Al-Rāzī 2004, vol. 2, p. 213). Trauma, then, has the potential to actualise the preparedness of a person, if they turn to the providentially provided support networks.[4]

6. Providentially Provided Support Networks

Repeated reference has been made to the providentially provided support networks that allow a person to actualise their preparedness following trauma. There are a number of support systems that God provides following trauma, which, if a person depends on, enables them to actualise their preparedness. This is not to say that trauma is a precondition for preparedness actualisation; Ibn 'Arabī makes it clear that the preparedness of humans is actualised in numerous ways commensurate with the numerous divine Names for which humans can be a locus of manifestation (see below). Nevertheless, if a person turns to the support networks furnished by God following trauma, it can be one of the ways in which actualisation of one's preparedness can occur. There are many support systems God provides, some of which (and this list is by no means exhaustive) include the remembrance of God (*dhikr*), turning to family and friends, turning to the master (*shakyh*) if one is a disciple (*murīd*), and seeking help from the Friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*).

6.1. The Remembrance of God (dhikr)

Ibn 'Arabī explains in the *Fuṣūṣ* that, if someone remembers God, God is with them such that the person witnesses the divine presence (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, pp. 168–69). Commentating this passage, al-Nābulusī adduces the tradition in which God declares, 'I "sit with" (*jalīs*) whoever remembers Me' (Ibn Abī Shayba 1989, vol. 1, p. 108; Al-Bayhaqī 2003, vol. 2, p. 171). Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990?), who is well known for his seminal apologetic work on Sufism, *Kitāb al-ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣṣawwuf*, clarifies that this does not mean God is literally with the person, but 'the veil is lifted between him and Him so it is as if he sees Him' (Al-Kalābādhī 1999, p. 251). Such is the closeness to the divine that is experienced by someone who remembers God, says al-Kalābādhī, that they are able to 'see' God because there are no barriers between them. This means that remembrance of God is one of the support networks set up by God following trauma, and it can be a means of actualising one's spiritual potentiality, as al-Nābulusī makes clear

(Al-Nābulusī 2008, vol. 2, pp. 220–21). This issue is explained in more detail in the stories of Mūsā and Yūnus below.

6.2. Family and Friends

The help of the people closest to a person is one of the main support systems God puts in place to enable actualisation following trauma. God emphasises in the Qur'an that even prophets, who are divinely inspired and enjoy such proximity to the divine that this primary source of support for them is far greater than for layfolk, still require the help of people around them. In the Qur'an, God tells the prophet Muḥammad, '*Had you spent all that is on earth, you would not have been able to unite their hearts. But Allah united them*' (Qur'an, 8:63). Widely acknowledged as one of the most important classical exegetes, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) (Berg 2000; Hidayatullah 2014, pp. 25–26; Saleh 2016), in his commentary on this verse, writes that the hearts of his companions being united behind him was a source of 'strengthening' (*taqwiya*) and a 'support' (*ta'yīd*) for the prophet Muḥammad (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, vol. 14, p. 45). This was one of the support systems that God set up for him so that he would be able to deal with the trauma to which he was subjected by his enemies. Al-Qushayrī is even more unequivocal when he says that God tells His messenger that 'He is the One who supported you with those who believed in you from the believers' (Al-Qushayrī n.d., vol. 1, p. 636). Ibn 'Arabī writes that God did not say that He united their hearts; rather, He says that He united 'them' (*hum*), which, according to him, means that God united them with Himself because He allowed them to realise their potentiality to manifest the divine Names and, in this way, they were 'united' with Him and able to be a perfect support system for the Prophet (Ibn 'Arabī n.d., vol. 2, p. 123). This concept is clarified further below (see the section on the Perfect Man). What all these commentators agree on, then, is that God arranges support for His prophets through those around them so that they are able to face trauma. If that is the case for prophets, then the support of family and friends is *a fortiori* required for ordinary people in order to actualise their potentiality following trauma.

6.3. The Master–Disciple (shaykh-murīd) Relationship

The master–disciple relationship is another potential source of support that can aid the disciple in actualising their spiritual preparedness following trauma. This relationship is 'characterized by an intensely personal bond between the two', as Tanvir Anjum notes (Anjum 2006, p. 250). Abu'l-Najīb Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168) elucidates that the relationship of the disciple with the master should be so close that the disciple should revere the master and be ready to serve the master in any way they can (Suhrawardī 1977, p. 35). This relationship is privileged over seclusion (Anjum 2006, p. 249), and can help a person following trauma. Indeed, Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), author of a highly influential mystical commentary on the Qur'an (Godlas 2006, p. 352), begins his work on this topic by adducing the well-known prophetic tradition that likens all Muslims to one body (Al-Sulamī 1990, p. 1). Al-Sulamī, thus, underscores the importance of the 'companionship' (*ṣuḥba*) of the master in order to actualise one's spiritual preparedness.

6.4. Friends of God (awliyā' Allāh)

Ibn 'Arabī frequently mentions that the Friends of God can be called upon when facing trauma in order to help a person. He gives numerous examples of this from his own life when he met with the Friends of God, or when they came to him as he was experiencing trauma in order to alleviate it, and how this allowed him to achieve his lofty spiritual potential (Addas 1993). He explains that this form of support is closely connected to the remembrance of God because the only reason the Friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*, from the verb *walī*, which denotes being close to) are called thus is because, when people look at them, they remember God and so they are not only close to God themselves, but they are a means of bringing others closer to God and allowing them to realise their spiritual potential (Ibn 'Arabī n.d., vol. 1, p. 347).

Claude Addas mentions how Ibn ʾArabī used to regularly meet the mystic *par excellence* al-Khiḍr (Addas 1993, pp. 62–63), whose interaction with Mūsā is detailed in chapter 18:60–82 of the Qurʾan. The otherworldly knowledge al-Khiḍr emblematises made him a mystic who was 'characterised not just as an active but as a transcendent model of the archetype' (Netton 2000, p. 76). Ibn ʾArabī's close association with him and the mystic, Abū Madyan (d. 594/1198), who is widely regarded as being his most important influence, although he never met him whilst Abū Madyan was alive, shows that the support of the Friends of God is not restricted to the living (Addas 1993, pp. 60–61; Cornell 1996). This, then, is another support mechanism providentially provided that has the capacity to draw people close to God and actualise their potential following trauma. Having already actualised their spiritual preparedness, the Friends of God are able to guide others so that they can do the same and fulfil their potentiality, which is to attain the rank of the Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-kāmil*).

7. Ibn ʾArabī and the Potentiality of Humans as the Perfect Man

Ibn ʾArabī believes that all things in existence, both in the phenomenal and pre-phenomenal realms (Chittick 1982), are manifestations of the kataphatic aspect of God (ʾAfifī 1939; Chodkiewicz 1993a, 1993b; Sells 1994; Landau 2008; Mayer 2008). This kataphatic aspect is not God as He truly is in His apophatic essence, but it is the way in which humans can forge a relationship with God, inasmuch as He can be known by the creation (Izutsu 1983). This knowable aspect of God is described by the ninety-nine 'most beautiful Names' (*al-Asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*) in the Qurʾan (Al-Ghazālī 1999). All things are a locus of manifestation of one of these divine Names; it is only humankind, however, that has the preparedness and potentiality to be a locus of manifestation of all ninety-nine Names and, as such, humankind is the very pinnacle of God's creation. When this potentiality is realised, a person reaches the rank of the Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-kāmil*) (Takeshita 1987; Al-Jīlī 1997; Morrissey 2020). Ibn ʾArabī writes,

> The universe remains protected as long as the Perfect Man remains in it. Do you not see that when he departs, and is detached from the treasure (*khizāna*) of the world, there will not be in the world that [being] through which God protected the universe? Thus, all that was in it [the universe] will dissipate . . . and the whole thing will be transferred to the hereafter (*al-ākhira*), so he [the Perfect Man] will be a seal for the hereafter, an everlasting seal (*khatm abadiyy*). (Ibn ʾArabī 2002, p. 50)

In this passage, Ibn ʾArabī likens the Perfect Man, who has realised his preparedness and potentiality to manifest all the divine Names, to the seal of a king through which the king protects his treasure. Once the seal is broken, the treasure is no longer protected. The Perfect Man is the seal because it is only he who fulfils the objective of God in creating the universe, which was so that He could see Himself in the Other (Ibn ʾArabī 2002, pp. 48–49). God describes Himself as 'a hidden treasure' (*kanz makhfiyy*) that wanted to be known, and that is the reason He created the universe (Ibn ʾArabī n.d., vol. 2, p. 399). Ibn ʾArabī underscores the centrality of the Perfect Man to the subsistence of the universe due to his capacity to be a complete locus of divine manifestation when he remarks that

> all that which was in the divine forms (*al-ṣuwar al-ilāhiyya*) of the Names is present within the composition of humankind, so it possesses 'the rank of encompassment and comprehensiveness' (*rutbat al-iḥāṭa waʾl-jamʿ*) with its existence. (Ibn ʾArabī 2002, p. 50)

The rank of encompassment and comprehensiveness is the preparedness and potentiality of humankind. Now it may be that, if someone is subjected to trauma and they turn to the various support systems that are providentially provided, it may allow them to attain this rank and for their lofty potentiality to be fulfilled. As mentioned previously, Ibn ʾArabī does not suggest that going through trauma is the only way to achieve this rank, but it can be one, if the sources of support furnished by God are turned to. He gives numerous examples in the *Fuṣūṣ* of how this can come about from the lives of prophets mentioned in

the Qur'an. We shall consider two examples, the first of which emblematises posttraumatic actualisation through preservation of the self, and the second, posttraumatic actualisation through preservation of the Other.

8. Traumas of Prophets in the Qur'an

8.1. Mūsā's Posttraumatic Actualisation through Preservation of the Self

Ibn 'Arabī recounts many traumas that prophets faced in the Qur'an in order to detail the posttraumatic actualisation that occurs within them, and which could also occur in believers if they follow the example of the prophets. A perspicuous illustration of this is the story of Mūsā. The Qur'an mentions that, before his birth, Pharoah killed many baby boys of the Israelites: '*And when We saved you from the people of Pharoah, who inflicted terrible punishment on you, they massacred your boys . . . .*' (Qur'an, 2:49). One of the most important proponents of the classical commentary tradition, Abū Isḥāq al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035?) (Saleh 2004), writes,

> Pharoah saw in his dream that it was as if a fire advanced from Jerusalem until it enveloped the houses of Egypt and burned them, and it burned the Copts, but it left the Children of Israel, so that terrified (*ḥāl*) him. He called for the sorcerers (*saḥara*) and the soothsayers (*kahana*) and asked them about his vision, to which they replied, 'A boy will be born to the Children of Israel, at his hands will you perish, your sovereignty come to an end, and your religion be changed'. So Pharoah commanded the murder of every boy born to the Children of Israel. He then gathered all the tribes under his command and said to them, 'Kill every boy born to the Children of Israel under your authority, and leave the girls', and he appointed among them those who would carry out [the task]. He thus hastened death among the males of the Children of Israel to the point that the chiefs of the Copts went to Pharoah and said to him, 'Death has become prevalent among the Children of Israel; you are slaughtering their young and their old are dying off, so the work all but falls on our shoulders'. Therefore, Pharoah commanded them to slaughter [the baby boys] one year, and leave them the next. Hārūn (Aaron) was born in the year that they weren't slaughtering the boys so he was left alone, and Mūsā was born in the year they were. (Al-Tha'labī 2015, vol. 1, pp. 191–92)

And so, when Mūsā was born, his mother placed him in a basket and he was found by Pharoah and his wife who adopted him. (Qur'an, 28:7–8). Consequently, he grew up in the palace of Pharoah (Qur'an, 28:14). One day, however, an incident occurred that would change everything:

> *And he entered the city when its people were unaware, so he found in it two men quarrelling: one was from his faction (shī'a), and the other was from his enemies. The one from his faction pleaded to him for help against the one who was from his enemies. So Mūsā dealt him a blow with his fist (wakaza) and did away with him (qaḍā 'alayh). He [Mūsā] then said [full of regret], 'This is from the acts of Satan; surely he is a blatant foe, leading others astray!' After this, he beseeched, 'My Lord! I have wronged myself, so forgive me!' Thus, He [God] forgave him; surely, He is ever-forgiving, compassionate. Thereafter, he [Mūsā] vowed, 'My Lord! Because you have conferred favour on me, I will never be a supporter (ẓahīr) of evildoers (mujrimīn)'.*

> *Then, the next morning, he [Mūsā] was in the city, afraid and waiting for [the consequences of what had happened], when the man who had appealed for his help the day before cried out for help again. Mūsā said to him, 'Surely, you are a blatant troublemaker!' So when he [Mūsā] was about to bear down on the man who was an enemy of both of them, he [the man from yesterday, mistakenly thinking Mūsā was going to attack him] said, 'Do you want to kill me like you killed a man yesterday? You just want to be a tyrant (jabbār) of the country, and you don't want to be among those who mend fences'. And a man came running from the outskirts of the city, crying, 'O Mūsā! The chiefs have had a consultation about you and decided to kill you, so escape! Surely, I am one*

of those who gives you good advice'. He thus left [the city], afraid and waiting for what would come next, saying, 'My Lord! Please save me from these unjust people (ẓālimīn)!'. (Qur'an, 28:15–21)

Ibn 'Arabī believes there is a connection between these two events. In other words, the murder of all the infant boys before his birth, and Mūsā's fleeing for his life following the incident in the city. He describes the latter event as 'the first thing with which God tested him' (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 202), and adduces an original interpretation of the incident:

He [Mūsā] himself did not have any interest (*iktirāth*) in killing him [the Coptic]. In spite of this, when the command of His Lord came to do it, he did not hesitate. That is due to the fact that the prophet is inwardly innocent (*ma'ṣūm al-bāṭin*) because he does not realise [what will happen] until God apprises him of it. (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 202)

The killing of the Coptic was 'so that patience in the face of what God tried him with would be actualised in him', says Ibn 'Arabī (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 202). The error that Mūsā attributes to Satan in the Qur'an (Qur'an, 28:15), Ibn 'Arabī views as an act of 'obedience', in the sense that it allows the posttraumatic actualisation to occur within him, thereby enabling him to attain the lofty rank reserved for him. The increased 'patience' in the face of adversity is what Tedeschi and Calhoun observed in people who had suffered trauma as an increase in personal strength to overcome difficulties they never knew they could confront. There was a general sense of being able to 'handle things better' after the trauma they had suffered (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, p. 6). However, the Qur'anic narrative makes it clear that this posttraumatic actualisation only occurs because Mūsā employs the support structures that God had furnished for him. When faced with the trauma, he immediately turns to God; this is the first and most important source of support for him. His dialogue with God expresses how the trauma has affected him and how he desperately relies on divine support. Tedeschi and Calhoun make the same point that 'traumatic events are not to be viewed simply as precursors to growth' (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, p. 2) and that 'the widespread assumptions that traumas often result in disorder should not be replaced with the expectations that growth is an inevitable result' (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, p. 2). It is only *because* Mūsā turned to God after this trauma that his posttraumatic actualisation occurred. Additionally, it is important to remember that, as Tedeschi and Calhoun note, 'posttraumatic growth is most likely a consequence of attempts at psychological survival, and it can coexist with the residual distress of trauma' (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, p. 5). This means that posttraumatic actualisation and residual distress from trauma are not mutually exclusive. They are even more unequivocal when they state that 'the presence of growth does not necessarily signal an end to pain or distress, and usually it is not accompanied by a perspective that views the crisis, loss, or trauma itself as desirable' (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, pp. 6–7). We observe in the Qur'anic narrative of Mūsā's trauma that the morning after the event, even though he turned to God and actualised his lofty potential, he was still '*afraid and waiting for [the consequences of what had happened]*'. At this point, he makes use of another providentially provided support, in the form of the man who comes to warn him that Pharoah's men are after him. It is the support of family and friends, then, whom we turn to after experiencing trauma, and who are given to us by God, that enables potential posttraumatic actualisation to occur.[5]

Nevertheless, the increased personal strength and spirituality that Mūsā exhibits following his trauma still stand in stark contrast to his entirely mundane (if completely understandable) reaction to this act, which was to flee. Now Ibn 'Arabī is ready to make the association between Mūsā's extraordinary birth and his seemingly ordinary act of fleeing: 'His escape when he feared [being killed] was only so that the lives of those who were killed [that he should live] would endure, so it was as if he fled for the sake of others' (Al-Jāmī 2005, p. 172). Ibn 'Arabī explains that Mūsā fled, not out of self-preservation, but in order to 'save' all the infant males who were murdered in order for him to survive. The spirits of all these infants were combined in Mūsā, as al-Jāmī clarifies:

> The wise men (*al-ḥukamā'*) of the era informed Pharoah that his ruin (*halāk*) and the end of his sovereignty would be at the hands of an infant who would be born in that era. So Pharoah commanded every son born to the Children of Israel to be killed as a precaution (*ḥidhran*) to ward off what God had decreed and preordained. But he did not know that there is no resisting (*lā maradd*) the decree of God, nor is there any amending His judgement. Therefore, that [i.e., their murder] became a cause (*sabab*) for the combining of these souls (*arwāḥ*) . . . and their union (*inḍimām*) with the soul of Mūsā . . . . He thus became strong (*taqawwa*) through them, and their essences (*khawaṣṣ*) were gathered together in him, and he was supported by them. (Al-Jāmī 2005, pp. 171–72)

The souls of all the infants who were massacred by Pharoah, therefore, combined with the soul of Mūsā giving him extraordinary spiritual power. Each one of these souls themselves possessed incredible spiritual strength, Ibn 'Arabī explains, because 'the young have recently (*ḥadīth al-'ahd*) been with their Lord since they are recently created' (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 197). All babies individually have enormous spiritual power due to their temporal proximity to God, says Ibn 'Arabī, and because all these babies were killed on account of Mūsā, all of their spiritual strength was transferred to him, so that, when he was fleeing, he was not fleeing to protect himself, he was fleeing to protect them.

The application of Mūsā's extraordinary situation, Ibn 'Arabī seems to be asserting, to the ordinary lives of believers is in human acts of self-preservation. The acts of self-preservation and survival following ordeals are often accompanied by posttraumatic guilt and shame; 'posttraumatic guilt can be defined as the fact of experiencing acute or prolonged states of guilt in the context of a traumatic situation. . . . In contrast, posttraumatic shame can be construed as acute or prolonged feelings of distress associated with self-attributions of having committed dishonorable acts in the context of a traumatic situation' (Wilson et al. 2006, p. 123). Self-preservation, since it often involves an ostensibly egocentric act, can be accompanied by feelings of shame and guilt, due to both negative self-evaluation and the negative evaluation of others (Clark and Wells 1995). Especially in cases where others have died, survivors often feel 'survivor guilt' (Cantrell 2017; Murray 2018; Murray et al. 2021).

Ibn 'Arabī explains that the instinct to survive and flee from dangerous situations is not egocentric at all. Connecting the survival of Mūsā, and the ordeal of all the infants murdered so he could live, with his act of fleeing when he was in danger, Ibn 'Arabī elucidates that the act of fleeing and doing anything to survive, while it may seem egocentric, is actually a selfless act. Mūsā fled not to save his own life, but to 'save' all those who had sacrificed themselves so he could live. In the same way, not only should survivors not feel guilty, intimates Ibn 'Arabī, because their survival is a validation of the sacrifice made by those who perished, but on a more quotidian level, the instinct to survive should be viewed as a selfless act because it is an acknowledgement of all the lives that intersect with our own. The instinct to survive, and the actions that make it possible, Mūsā's act shows us, is a way to preserve not only our own life but the lives of all those who touch our lives and who would be affected by the loss of our life.

The posttraumatic actualisation that occurs in Mūsā because of all the trials he is subjected to and because he turns to the support mechanisms God had furnished for him, so that the rank ordained for him is achieved, according to Ibn 'Arabī (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 202), is expressed in all five domains of posttraumatic growth that Tedeschi and Calhoun delineate (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004). In addition to his increase in personal strength through the ordeals, his flight from danger allows him to have a greater appreciation for his life and gives it new purpose, exposing its possibilities, as exhibited by his declaration *My Lord! Because you have conferred favour on me, I will never be a supporter (ẓahīr) of evildoers (mujrimīn)'.* The cognisance of the importance of his own life might even be said to be a manifestation of his more intimate relationship with those who sacrificed themselves so he could live. All of this, for Ibn 'Arabī, is subsumed under the increased spirituality of Mūsā, or his posttraumatic actualisation. Perhaps the best instance of a more intimate relationship

with others after a traumatic event, however, is that of the prophet Yūnūs (Jonah), whose ordeal provokes a comprehensive re-evaluation of his relationship to his people.

8.2. Yūnus' Posttraumatic Actualisation through Preservation of the Other

Yūnus is portrayed in the Qur'an as a prophet who becomes exasperated with the intransigence of his people and their unwillingness to heed his call to believe in one God. He therefore warns them of impending divine punishment and abandons them without waiting for the command of God to do so. In the Qur'an, God asks,

> *So why is it that there was never a town that believed, and its belief would have benefitted it, except the people of Yūnus? When they believed, We did away with the punishment that would have humiliated them ('adhāb al-khizy) in the life of the world, and allowed them to enjoy [the life of the world] for a time. (Qur'an, 10:98)*

Al-Ṭabarī explains that

> God made an exception of the people of Yūnus from among the people of other towns whose faith did not benefit them after the punishment descended in their backyards, and He did not include them [the people of Yūnus] with them [the peoples that were destroyed], and He informed His creation that only their faith benefitted them from among all the peoples besides them. (Al-Ṭabarī 2000, vol. 15, p. 206)

So his people believed after Yūnus left them, warning them that the punishment of God was going to befall them, but because he was hasty, he was subjected to the trial of the whale so that his potentiality could be attained (Qur'an, 37:139–48). Exegetes write that, after leaving, Yūnus boarded a ship, but it was soon enveloped in a mighty storm. The seafarers immediately apprehended that the storm was divine punishment against one of the people on the ship, so they drew lots to see who they would throw overboard that the rest of them could live. When they did this, it was Yūnus who drew the shortest lot, so they cast him into the sea where the whale swallowed him (Al-Maḥallī and al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī n.d., p. 595).

Ibn 'Arabī speaks of the posttraumatic actualisation of both Yūnus, through being subjected to the trial of the whale, and his people, through being abandoned by their prophet and seeing the divine punishment approach (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, pp. 167–70). He begins the chapter with the declaration:

> Know that this human creation (*al-nash'a al-insāniyya*)—with the perfection of its soul (*rūḥ*), body (*jism*) and spirit (*nafs*)—was created by God in His form. No one, therefore, must take it upon themselves to destroy its arrangement (*niẓām*) except He Who created it. (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 167)

In the prophetic tradition it states, 'Surely God created Ādam in His form' (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj n.d., vol. 4, p. 2017; 'Abd al-Razzāq 1983, vol. 9, p. 444; Ibn Ḥibbān 1988, vol. 12, p. 420; Abū Bakr al-Bazzār 1988–2009, vol. 15, p. 161; Ibn Ḥanbal 2001, vol. 12, p. 275), which is what Ibn 'Arabī alludes to, according to al-Nābulusī (Al-Nābulusī 2008, vol. 2, p. 212). 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 736/1335?) (Lala 2019), the teacher of one of the principal promulgators of Ibn 'Arabī's thought in the Ottoman period, Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350) (Rustom 2005), and himself a significant formaliser of Ibn 'Arabī's thought, clarifies that, by the creation of Ādam

> with its perfection (*kamāl*) and its comprehensiveness, both outwardly (*zāhiran*) and inwardly (*bāṭinan*), . . . [it] means the species of humankind because He created it with His hands and with His form. (Al-Qāshānī 1892, p. 209)

In addition to the outer form of humankind being in the form of God, its inward form is in His form because only it has the preparedness and potentiality to manifest all of the divine Names, says al-Qāshānī. With this soaring potentiality comes the fabulously high value of human life, says Ibn 'Arabī:

The objective (*gharad*) . . . is showing deference (*murā'ā*) for this human creation, and [showing] that raising it up is better than tearing it down. Do you not see that God has imposed a tax (*jizya*) and peace on an enemy of the religion (*'aduw al-dīn*) [living in Muslim lands] in order to preserve their life? And He said, '*If they incline towards peace, then so must you, and trust in God*' (Qur'an, 8:61). Do you not see that the family member of the person murdered is encouraged to accept blood money or to forgive [the murder], and only if they disagree, then retaliation (*qiṣāṣ*) is exacted? Do you not see that, if there is a group of family members [of a murdered person], and one of them accepts the blood money or forgives [the murder], and the rest want to have the murderer killed [in retaliation], then the opinion of the one who forgives is given precedence and [the murderer] is not killed in retaliation? Do you not see that he [the Prophet Muḥammad], peace be upon him, said, . . . 'If he kills him, he is like him'. And do you not see that He [God] said, '*The recompense (jazā') of evil (sayyi'a) is evil that is just like it*' (Qur'an, 42:40), so He made retaliation evil, in the sense that it grieves and saddens (*yasū'*), even though it is Islamically allowed. '*So whoever forgives and makes peace, then God will reward him*' (Qur'an, 42:40). Thus, whoever forgives them and does not kill them, then they will be rewarded by Him in whose form they are as He has more right (*aḥaqq*) to them because He created them for that purpose. (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, pp. 167–68)

Ibn 'Arabī gives numerous examples to prove that God puts an incredibly high premium on human life because humankind has the preparedness and potentiality to be a locus of manifestation of all the divine Names. He begins with the tax that is imposed on non-Muslims living in lands conquered by Muslims (*jizya*) (Ahmed and Ahmad 1975). He explains that God did not command non-Muslims to be killed, even though they rejected belief in Him, because they still have the potentiality to manifest the Names, even if they have not yet actualised that potentiality. He then mentions that, even though like-for-like retaliation (*qiṣāṣ*) is permissible in Islam for murder, in accordance with Q2:179 and Q5:45 (Mohamed 1982), the better way is to forgive or accept blood money in order to preserve the potentiality of the murderer to manifest the divine Names. He gives his legal opinion that, if there are numerous people that constitute the injured party and just one of them forgives or accepts the blood money whilst the others want like-for-like retribution, the wish of the former is accepted, as it is concordant with the spirit of the religion to save life. Al-Qāshānī sums up Ibn 'Arabī's position in the following way:

It is more important to protect the lives of those who deserve execution according to Islamic law—like the unbelievers, polytheists and others—because they have been created by God, rather than kill them out of fervour to protect God's rights and His religion. (Al-Qāshānī 1892, p. 209)

Ibn 'Arabī finds support for his opinion in the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad. The tradition he refers to is recorded with variations in many compilations. The version in *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* runs:

A man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, with an Ethiopian slave (*ḥabshiyy*) and remarked, 'This man has killed my nephew'. The Prophet asked [the Ethiopian slave], 'How did you kill him?' He replied, 'I struck his head with an axe, but I did not mean to kill him'. The Prophet enquired, 'Do you have means to pay his blood money (*diya*)?' He answered in the negative. The Prophet then asked, 'If I send you to people to ask for the money, will you be able to gather his blood money?' He again replied in the negative. The Prophet finally asked, 'Will your masters give you his blood money?' He said, 'No'. So the Prophet told the man [who had brought him], 'Take him'. The man thus came out to kill him, when the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'If he kills him, is he not like him?'. (Abū Dāwūd 2009, vol. 6, p. 551)

Ibn ʾArabī claims that the person who does not seek retribution is rewarded by God because that person has preserved a locus of manifestation of the divine Names (Al-Qayṣarī 1955, p. 977; Al-Jāmī 2009, p. 397). And, in protecting a locus of manifestation of the divine Names, He has 'preserved' God since 'God is not apparent through His Name "The Manifest" (*Al-Ẓāhir*) except through his [the person who would be killed's] existence, so whoever preserves him (*rāʿāhū*), preserves God' (Ibn ʾArabī 2002, p. 168).

It is clear that Ibn ʾArabī places an enormous premium on human life because preserving it is preserving the only being in sensible reality that has the potentiality to manifest all of His Names, and therefore the only thing that fully exhibits His divine Name, 'The Manifest'. Al-Qayṣarī writes that since 'God is not apparent through His Name "The Manifest" except by the existence of the slave [to be killed], if someone forgives him and does well by him, God is obligated to reward him' (Al-Qayṣarī 1955, p. 977). It is for this reason that one of the principal early commentators of the *Fuṣūṣ*, whose commentary was used by subsequent commentators as a blueprint (Todd 2014, p. 23), Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. 700/1300?), maintains that the wisdom of this chapter is not only that of the divine 'breath' (*nafas*), but also each 'spirit' or 'soul' (*nafs*) that should be preserved because it is a locus of divine manifestation (Al-Jandī 2007, pp. 473–74).

Ibn ʾArabī explains that there is a symbiotic relationship between the person who preserves the life of another human being and the one who they save. Not only does the person who is saved have their preparedness and potentiality to manifest the divine Names preserved since they remain alive, but the person who saves them, through saving them, also actualises their own potentiality to manifest the divine Names of mercy and compassion. He writes,

> When you have comprehended that God preserves and maintains this creation [of humans], then it is even more appropriate (*awlā*) for you to preserve it since your eternal happiness (*saʿāda*) comes from it. For, as long as a person lives, it is hoped that the quality of perfection (*kamāl*) for which they have been created will be attained by them. And whoever strives to destroy (*hadam*) them, is striving to prevent them from attaining the purpose for which they were created. (Ibn ʾArabī 2002, p. 168)

Even though God allows retaliation, says Ibn ʾArabī, so that legal order can be maintained in society (Ibn ʾArabī 2002, pp. 167–68), by resorting to retaliation and cutting off the possibility of a person to actualise their potentiality, there is a reciprocal curtailment of one's own posttraumatic actualisation.

If the chapter of Mūsā shows us that posttraumatic actualisation of the self can occur through preservation of the self so that all the relationships connected to it are likewise preserved, this chapter shows us that posttraumatic actualisation of the self can occur through preservation of others so that the potentiality that is ordained for the Other is maintained, and through this, the potentiality that is ordained for the self is attained. In this way, all five domains that Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) delineate are achieved, but through the Other. Thus, a greater appreciation for life is gained through preservation of someone else's life because the person realises just how valuable a human, who has the potentiality to be a locus of manifestation for all the divine Names, is. This means there is a change in priorities from retribution, which would curtail that potentiality, to forgiveness, which would allow it to flourish.

Greater personal strength is gained, not through a trial that imperils one's own life as it did in the case of Mūsā, but through a trial in which someone else's life is in danger. The spiritual strength in this case emanates from the power to forgive and have compassion, because the posttraumatic actualisation of the person allows them to see all other humans as loci of the divine Name, 'The Manifest', Who is revealed through their existence. There is also a recognition of new possibilities due to posttraumatic actualisation. Forgiveness and compassion become possibilities because maintaining potentialities is more important than destroying them. A new course of action and a new path that does not involve limiting one's own preparedness and potentiality by curtailing someone else's become an option. As in the

case of Mūsā, all of this is within the framework of spiritual development. It is the spiritual development of an individual that takes the form of posttraumatic actualisation, which allows for attainment in all the other domains because a person turns to the providentially provided support systems. All of these things were latent within Mūsā and Yūnūs, but the trauma they experienced actualised their latent potentiality, as Ibn 'Arabī affirms (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 202). For Yūnūs, this actualisation came through 'more intimate relationships with others' (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, p. 6).

In contradistinction to Mūsā, for whom preserving his own life was the trauma that yielded his actualisation, or the latent rank that God had ordained for him because he turned to the systems God put in place for his support, Yūnus' trauma occurred because he abandoned his people before God had commanded him to do so. Yūnus, in the same way as Mūsā, however, is able to achieve the rank ordained for him because he turns to the primary support system that is available to him: God. His prayer in the belly of the whale allows his posttraumatic actualisation to occur. The trial of the whale that he was subjected to also allowed him to realise the value of all human life, and not to be too quick to give up on its potentiality. Ibn 'Arabī's long disquisition on the importance of human life reveals that maintenance of human potentiality is tantamount to maintenance of the divine Names, since it is only in it that they are manifested. Even though his people deserved to be abandoned on account of their recalcitrance, it did not behoove Yūnus to be so eager to do so. The rank that was ordained for him was the rank of forgiveness and mercy, which he was able to attain only after the trauma of the trial of the whale.

Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272), one of the principal polyvalent commentators of the Qur'an (Calder 1993), explains that the whale acted as a 'sanctuary' (*ḥirz*) for Yūnus so that he could reach his preparedness and potentiality. This is elaborated on by the Sufi polymath, Muḥammad Thanā' Allāh Pānīpatī (d. 1225/1810) (Qadri 1988), who writes that the verses, '*Had he not been of those who glorify God. He would have remained in its belly till the day when the dead will be raised*', signify Yūnus was 'remembering' God in the belly of the whale (Pānīpatī 2007, vol. 8, p. 144). Ibn 'Arabī attaches mystical significance to this act of remembrance and seems to employ it as a conduit for attaining the potentiality that is ordained for a person:

> How wonderful was what the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'Shall I not tell you that which is better for you and superior than your confronting your enemy so that you strike their necks (*taḍribū riqābahum*) and they strike yours? It is the remembrance of God (*dhikr Allāh*)' (Ibn Ḥanbal 2001, vol. 45, p. 515). And that is because no one knows the value of the human creation except those who remember God, remembering being their only objective. (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 168)

Ibn 'Arabī sets up an opposition between the taking of human life and the remembrance of God, and deems the latter to be superior to the former, even if the former was to defend the religion. He then expatiates on this issue by detailing precisely why remembrance of God is better:

> It is because God, the Exalted, is with those who remember Him, and so the one who remembers Him witnesses Whom they remember. For if the one who remembers does not witness God, Who is with them, then they are not remembering Him [in earnest]. (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, pp. 168–69)

The remembrance of God is better than fighting to defend God's religion because if someone truly remembers God then God is with them, as mentioned previously. Al-Qayṣarī explains that someone who fights in the cause of God is rewarded with paradise, whilst someone who remembers God in earnest gets to be with God, which is the highest reward one can have (Al-Qayṣarī 1955, p. 979). Al-Qāshānī elaborates that this type of remembrance is such that it permeates every part of the person.

> The type of remembrance that is incumbent upon a person is that they remember God with their tongue whilst their thoughts (*khawāṭir*) and internal monologues (*ḥadīth al-nafs*) [about everything else] are cast aside. So God is perceived with

> the heart and that heart is with the One remembered, the intellect is attached to the meaning of the remembrance, and the essence of the person is annihilated in the One remembered through remembrance. Their soul witnesses God for He is with them; [He is] the One witnessed by the one who remembers [Him]. (Al-Qāshānī 1892, p. 211)

When the remembrance of God is of this type, such that it permeates the heart, mind, and soul, then it is superior to all other things, but how is it that this sort of remembrance of God allows a person to comprehend the true value of human life as Ibn 'Arabī contends? The answer to this is intimated by Ibn 'Arabī when he mentions that 'humankind is multiple, and not of one essence; while God is of one essence, but with multiple divine Names' (Ibn 'Arabī 2002, p. 169). The reason only someone who truly remembers God can know the value of human life is that the multiplicity of God's single essence is manifested in the phenomenal realm by the multiplicity of humankind's essence, because only it manifests all the divine Names. This means that a person who truly remembers God, such that they cast aside all distractions, as al-Qāshānī says, sees past ostensible reality to the potentiality of the person, and thus tries to preserve it. It is only through preserving their potentiality and preparedness that they actualise their own potentiality. The trauma Yūnus faced in the whale allowed him to actualise his own preparedness because it enabled him to truly remember God. Once he did this, he became cognisant of the soaring potentiality of all humankind, and repented for being so hasty in giving up on it. His realisation of the potentiality of the Other was the conduit for his own posttraumatic actualisation.

9. Conclusions

Major positive changes have been observed in numerous studies in people who have been through traumatic events. The growth that resulted from such experiences enabled the survivors to have a greater appreciation for life, deeper relationships with others, a greater sense of personal strength, better recognition of new possibilities for their lives, and a deeper sense of spirituality (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, p. 6). Ibn 'Arabī argues that traumatic events do not facilitate posttraumatic growth; rather, they can allow the potentiality of a person that was ordained for them by God, or their preparedness, to be actualised. This posttraumatic actualisation occurs when a person turns to the support systems providentially provided. Further, it can occur through preservation of the self, or it may occur through preservation of others. Ibn 'Arabī shows through the story of Mūsā that his act of self-preservation when confronted with a traumatic event was actually an act of preserving all the others who had sacrificed their lives for him. The moral for people is that self-preservation in the face of trauma can lead to posttraumatic actualisation of our own spiritual potentiality, because it is simultaneously protecting all the lives that have touched our own. If self-preservation, in this sense, is preservation of the Other, then in the story of Yūnus, the preservation of the Other overtly leads to actualisation of one's own preparedness and potentiality. Ibn 'Arabī explains that there is a direct proportionality between preservation of the potentiality of others and actualisation of the spiritual potentiality of the self. Through protecting others and thus preserving their spiritual potentiality, a person can actualise their own potentiality. This is why, even when subjected to trauma by others where there can be righteous retribution, Ibn 'Arabī recommends mercy and forgiveness. It is this forgiveness that allows the preparedness and potentiality of the guilty party to flourish, and by enabling that to occur, even though they have a right to revenge, the injured party comprehends the value of the loci of divine manifestation and, by extension, God Himself. This is their posttraumatic actualisation.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Notes

[1] This does not mean that increased religiosity is always positive; Pargament also notes cases in which it leads to destructive behaviours (Pargament 2002, p. 49).

[2] Even though spiritual experiences tend to be distinguishable from religious experiences because they are private, as opposed to experiences informed by and occurring within a religious tradition that are articulated in the lexicon of that tradition (Hood 2009, p. 189), Ibn ʾArabī makes the spiritual religious by articulating his private experience in the vocabulary of Islamic metaphysical language, and he makes the religious spiritual by vaunting the private experience of the mystic and allowing it to commentate scripture (Lala 2022).

[3] All translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

[4] I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this astute observation.

[5] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer who made many of the salient points mentioned here, thereby making the section far more nuanced.

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