INTRODUCTION

The present chapter is a case study of Dov Yirmiya, a man who can best be described as a political altruist. Yirmiya's life is best characterized by his altruistic deeds carried out within the Israeli political context. Dov has been described as a "pessimistic do-gooder" and an "Arab lover," tying together the public-political and personal-altruistic facets of his personality.

The chapter is comprised of five sections: The first, "Dov Yirmiya: A Life Story," recounts the major events in Yirmiya's life. The second part, "Personal versus Public Dimensions of Altruism," describes Dov's altruistic actions during the Lebanon War (June 1982–end 1983). The third part, "The Crystallization of a Political-Altruist," portrays Yirmiya’s construction of his altruistic and political self. The fourth section, "Reflections and Interpretations," is based on an introspective conversation with Dov. The fifth section, "A Theoretical Summary of a Political-Altruist," is a conceptualization of a political altruist that describes Yirmiya as an activist who functions between personal and collective boundaries. This section suggests the contribution of this work to the field of altruism and personality.

I. DOV YIRMIYA: A LIFE STORY

Dov Yirmiya was born in 1914 in the moshava (settlement) of Beit-Gan near Yavniel. In 1920, his family moved to Nahalal, the first moshav, and established a farm. Dov's childhood was shaped by
his life in Nahalal, and the daily hardships of being the son of a farming family (Halutzim-Haklaim). To be a farmer in those years (1920) was the realization of the Zionist dream, and working the land (Adama) was the highest mission. However, this task entailed considerable hardship for Dov's family.

Although Dov's father and mother were committed to the idea of becoming pioneers (Halutzim), they were not prepared for this destiny. Dov's mother grew up in a middle-class family and was a student of pharmacology in Russia. Dov's father moved to Palestine for two reasons. The first was to escape and find refuge from the Russian Okhranka (Secret Police) that was after him for his revolutionary activities. Secondly, his family wanted him to study engineering at the Technion in Haifa. While Dov's mother was a Zionist, his father was a cosmopolitan Socialist. Dov's parents had opposite personalities and approaches to their duties and commitments in life.

Upon deciding to become a farmer, Dov's mother devoted all her life to the farm (Meshek) in Nahalal. She was a woman of firm responsibility and commitment to her duty, working eighteen hours a day to earn some extra money in order to balance the family budget. Rooted in his revolutionary youth, Dov's father possessed a certain penchant for adventure, mixed with bohemian tendencies. Of his own accord, he embraced farming as a way of life upon his arrival in Palestine in 1910, although he was sent by his family to study engineering at the Technion. He passed on his extensive knowledge of farming as well as his skill and love of toiling the soil to Dov, who from childhood worked on the farm and became a devout farmer himself.

However, the difficult economic conditions of the time inflicted their farm with unusual misfortune. Consequently, the farm incurred considerable debts. Dov's father was forced to seek work elsewhere in order to defray those debts, leaving his wife with Dov, who was still a young boy, to operate the farm. Following the economic blows that befell them, Dov's parents' marriage went astray.

His parents separated in 1937 but never divorced. His father joined Kibbutz Beit-Alpha and was an outstanding and devoted farmer until he reached the age of eighty. Dov's father died at the age of ninety-two in full command of his body and mind. Torn between these two strong people, Dov recalls that he was always "his mother's son." He identified with her and worked hard to help
her. But at the same time Dov was attracted to his father’s extensive knowledge of farming, music, art, literature, and politics, as well as his value system. Dov himself had a talent for music, and his father encouraged him to pursue this. He remembers that his father was the one who taught him about socialism, justice, and the importance of developing friendly relationships with their Arab neighbors in the Izrael Valley. Dov maintained a close relationship with each of his parents separately, until they passed away. (She lived with Dov during the last years of her life.) His mother was, according to his definition, “a perfectionist who set very high standards.” Without doubt, his strong values of commitment, duty, and hard work were influenced by her.

Overall, Dov’s personality combines this sense of devotion and commitment with certain theatrical traits, a combination that gives him a special charm. Dov left the farm in 1934 because he wanted to study music in Tel-Aviv. His mother sold the farm in 1939, and moved to Hadera, where she became the director of an agricultural training school for young women (Meshek H’poa’loj).

In 1929, Yirmiya joined the Haganah. In 1934, while studying music in Tel-Aviv, he joined the “Hashomer Hatzair,” a leftist youth movement that taught its members the ideology of communal, Socialist way of life and encouraged them to materialize this ideology by founding new kibbutzim. In 1938, with a group of youth from this movement, Dov founded Kibbutz Eilon in the Western Galilee. He participated in the Battle of Hanita, and was later appointed commander of Eilon. During World War II, Dov served in a unit of the Palestinian Transport Corps in the British army, operating in the Middle Eastern and North African fronts, and in the Allied forces invasion of Italy. When the war was over, he helped the Palyam (Palmach Naval Corps) smuggle the remnants of the Holocaust survivors into Palestine. In 1948, Dov joined the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and during the War of Independence served as a company commander and a battalion second in command, participating in battles in the Eastern and Western Galilee, and in the conquest of Nazareth. After the war, he continued to serve in the army, eventually reaching the rank of colonel (Aluf-Mishne).

Dov retired from active service in the IDF in 1958, and became a member of Kibbutz Sarid, where he worked in agriculture and taught Hebrew to new immigrants. An active member of Mapam, the Socialist left party, Dov was an activist in the struggle for equality for the Israeli Arabs and participated in actions against
the military rule over the Arab minority. Dov saw the continuation of military rule beyond the end of the War of Independence as a political act designed to oppress, and discriminate against, the Arab minority in Israel. Already in 1948, he had refused to accept the position of military governor of the Galilee that he had been offered at the time. Following his retirement from IDF active service in 1958, he engaged in a continuous political struggle against the military rule until its dissolution in 1966.

In 1965, he became one of the founders of the northern district Nature Reserve Authority (NRA), where he worked until he retired in 1979. During this time, he vociferously objected to the establishment of the Green Patrol as a section of the NRA. Yirmiya accused the NRA director, General Yaffe, who had been Dov's friend since adolescence, of initiating the Green Patrol as a private militia for the harassment of the Bedouins under the pretext of "nature conservancy." He assailed the Green Patrol for driving away Bedouin shepherds from lands in the Galilee and the Negev and for confiscating their herds.

During the 1967 war, Dov volunteered for service and was appointed defense commander of the town of Kiryat-Shmonah, and since then has served in the reserves on a voluntary basis. In 1974, following the PLO attack on Ma'alot, he established the Civil Guard Unit in his present home in the town of Nahariya in the Western Galilee, and was its first commander. In this capacity, he personally fought a terrorist group that attacked and killed a mother and her two children in a residence near his home. The civil guard unit (Hamishmar Ha'ezrahi) he established was the first in the country, and has served as a model for the National Civil Guard system.

During the Littani campaign in 1978, Dov served as an officer in a military rule unit, which was named the Unit for Civilian Aid for political reasons. During the Lebanon War, he served once again in the same unit. At that time, he kept a daily diary of his activities and of the events he witnessed in Lebanon. The diary was published as a book entitled *My War Diary* in 1983. Several chapters describing the tragedy of Palestinian refugees and the actions and behavior of the IDF were published earlier, in July of 1982, in an Israeli newspaper. Following their publication, Dov was expelled from the army in August of the same year. After his expulsion from the army, Dov devoted all of his time to helping the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Details of this period are described in the second part of the present chapter. Yirmiya's effort to aid the refugees and
publicize their plight was recognized in December 1983, when he was granted the Emil Grinzweig Award (named after the "Peace Now" activist who had been killed by a grenade thrown by a right-wing Jew) as man of the year for his work for human rights. The award is granted by the Civil Rights Association in Israel. The money was donated to a kindergarten of the Arab el Cammane Bedouin tribe.

Until the Lebanon War, Dov's actions had fallen within the legitimate boundaries of Israeli society. Although Dov's life was interwoven with two different missions, one being the actualization of a Jewish homeland and the other being the pursuit of Jewish-Arab coexistence and reconciliation, there always seemed to be a balance between the two. Most of the documentation about the man reflects this message: he was a "bleeding-heart" Jew who strongly believed in the vision and mission of a Jewish-Zionist homeland. Since the Lebanon War, all of Dov's activities have been centered on the Jewish-Arab relationship, with a special emphasis on the plight of the Palestinians and their vantage point. Consequently, from 1983 to 1989, Dov became a very controversial figure in the Israeli-Jewish society.

Among his activities in recent years, Dov served as a liaison for the American Jewish volunteers of "Interns for Peace." This organization, founded in the U.S., brought together community workers from Israel (both Jews and Arabs) and from the U.S. The volunteers worked on educational and recreational projects in neighboring Arab and Jewish communities in order to promote understanding and coexistence. Dov's role in this project was to prepare the American volunteers for their assignment in the Arab villages. Subsequently, he served, together with an Arab colleague, as a secretary of Reshet (Network). The function of this organization was to coordinate all voluntary educational and community-oriented groups in Israel promoting Jewish-Arab understanding.

In the summer of 1984, following Kahane's election to the Knesset, Dov resigned from his position in Reshet in order to devote himself full-time to work for the Jewish-Arab Committee against Racism and for Coexistence. Together with Maruan Dwairi of Nazareth, Dov became the coordinator of this organization, where he was active for almost two years. Wherever Kahane organized a demonstration, usually a highly provocative one, Dov and the committee members held a counterdemonstration. Once Kahane's
platform was recognized as racist and he was no longer able to be reelected to the Knesset, the committee dissolved. During these two years, Dov experienced physical violence for the first time. While demonstrating in Jerusalem against Kahane in February of 1986, he was badly beaten by a few “Magav” (border police) soldiers, and spent a month in bed.

In 1987, Yirmiya joined a delegation that traveled to meet with PLO representatives in Romania. The government and the general public bitterly attacked the Jewish group invited to attend this first meeting with the PLO. Of all the Jews that attended the meetings, Dov was the only Ashkenazi Jew who could speak, read, and write Arabic fluently. Upon their return, the secretariat members of the delegation were tried, fined, and sentenced to a six-month prison term. With the outbreak of the Intifada in December 1987, Dov was deeply troubled. In his view, it was the realization of the bleak future he had feared so much, and the danger of the moral destruction of the Israeli society. What he saw and experienced in the Lebanon War had grown to become infinitely more frightening.

A man of action, Dov and two other Jewish young men established the “Red Line” movement, Jews and Arabs against the occupation. The “Red line” launched a four-day peace march from the Galilee to Jerusalem as an immediate response to the IDF treatment of the Intifada and the continued occupation. It was the first movement, of Jews and Arabs, that protested the IDF handling of the Intifada and the continued occupation that had led to it. For Dov, the occupation was, and still is, the root of all evil. It was Dov, his fifty years of personal contacts with Arabs in the Galilee, his reputation for political involvement, peace seeking, and benevolent activities, that made this group unique. The movement is still active to this day. The Intifada has worried Dov and made him more pessimistic than ever before. His focus is on protest activities within the green lines, and on rendering material and moral support to the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Yirmiya, in the shadow of the Intifada, has emerged as one of the country’s leading advocates of sarvanut (conscientious objection) to serve in the territories. Yirmiya was interrogated by the police for his active support of this dissident movement.

In the early 1980s, Yirmiya had a well-publicized correspondence with the veteran “Sarvan,” Gadi Elgazi. Elgazi refused to serve in occupied Lebanon and was sentenced to prison. Dov comments, “At that time, I argued against this, believing that it was
better that people with a conscience would serve in order to moderate and curb IDF behavior there. Now, I know that Elgazi was right. The soldiers must refuse to serve as part of the occupying forces of thuggery and repression” (*Jerusalem Post Magazine*, June 24, 1988; for the sarvanut movement in Israel, see Linn 1989; Linn 1988).

Dov continues to be in frequent contact with his many Arab friends, acquaintances, and admirers. In a recent interview, he told me that he works with children in a Bedouin settlement in the Galilee on Mount Cammane. Yirmiya has been the driving force behind fund raising for the kindergarten that for four years has been the only facility for 3–6-year-old children of the Arab Sawaed tribe. Since the mid-sixties, the government has been cajoling and pushing the Arab Cammane to get off the mountain and settle in a nearby wadi. The tribe has resisted the attempted transfer; some of their lands have been expropriated or seized and several houses have been destroyed by bulldozers. The government’s refusal to grant official recognition to the Arab Cammane sites has resulted in a denial of all basic services to the village. As a result, Yirmiya decided to help operate a kindergarten and is there at least once every two weeks. “You cannot imagine the joy I have in seeing those kids in the kindergarten that I am helping operate. I take my accordion, and I teach them to sing and dance ‘Hevenu Shalom Alechem’ [We brought peace on you]. They are my kids, their families are my families, and they call me Sidna Dov [Grandpa Dov]. Sometimes, not realizing that I am a Jew, they sing anti-Jewish songs that they heard on the radio, at which point Bedouin teachers would use the occasion to tell them that I am a Jew..., emphasizing the absurdity of the songs and of the stereotype of the Israeli Jew.”

II. THE PERSONAL VERSUS PUBLIC DIMENSIONS OF ALTRUISM

In analyzing Dov Yirmiya’s actions and activities, a consistent pattern emerges from his early adulthood as a young commander in the 1948 War of Independence to the summer of 1989. Yirmiya’s way is to actively pursue two roads, two main paths. One involves altruistic actions according to the traditional definition of helping people in need, sharing resources with them (Bar-Tal 1985–1986; Staub 1978; Eisenberg 1986), and even more so, taking personal
risks in order to rescue people (Oliner and Oliner 1988). The second entails public and political actions: organizing and playing a role in political groups, writing articles and letters to newspaper editors, organizing demonstrations, publishing a book, and lecturing in public. In other words, it means working not only for the “people” but also for the “cause.”

It seems that as an altruistic person, Yirmiya seeks meaningful and personal relationships with people in need. He pursues the personal, face-to-face contact and interaction with human beings who are facing crisis, under stress, or in danger; it may be a family denied its right to build its home on their land in the Galilee, an Arab threatened to be expelled from his job, a Bedouin who needs certain contacts to obtain travel documents, or a Russian immigrant who needs furniture. In all these (real) cases, Dov is there to help.

Yet, as a political persona, Yirmiya is neither naive nor just a “good Samaritan.” He has an extraordinary sense of awareness and understanding that society in general, and powerful people in particular, are significant players in enhancing or depriving the masses and the individuals of their needs. Consequently, throughout his entire life, Yirmiya has been fighting powerful key figures in Israeli society such as Dayan, Kenig, Yaffe, Sharon, and others. For this he paid dearly. He has never been “one of the boys,” nor a powerful political figure. He has never been awarded money, status, fame, or approval by the authorities. His power and strength stem from his conviction that he himself is indeed moral, right, clean, and uncorrupted by money, power, majority consent, or favoritism. Today, at the age of seventy-five, he is one of the living symbols of Israel in its ideal form. He lives modestly, in a nearly spartan fashion, dresses in the 1948 battledress fashion, and devotes all his energy to causes in which he believes.

In the history of this man’s life, which includes five decades of toiling for coexistence between Jews and Arabs, the period of the Lebanon War clearly illustrates the two dimensions of altruism: personal and public. When the IDF invaded Lebanon in June 1982, Dov was called to serve in his unit. Having lived almost all of his adult life in the Galilee, and having dedicated a good share of his life to its defense, he knew from the start that “Operation Peace for the Galilee,” as this was intentionally labeled by the Likud government, was totally unnecessary and unjustified. His wife, Menuha (the daughter of Yaffe, the founding family of Nahalal and a
prominent figure in the *Halutzim* generation) implored him not to go. She said, "After all, you are against this war, you do not have to go because of your age." Despite his initial objection to the war, Dov decided to serve so that he would be able to help victims of Israeli aggression, and was at the age of sixty-eight the oldest soldier to serve in the Lebanon War.

Dov was emotionally torn by the inner conflict involved in joining an evil system in order to minimize the suffering of others. He maintained the belief that even in an unpleasant situation a person as an individual can do significant good. Such feelings occur frequently among altruistic people (Staub 1984). In many of his writings during and after the war, Yirmiya continually returns to the fact that he joined the "Operation," even though he knew it was fundamentally wrong. In a lecture he gave in December 1984 at the Forum, one of the most respected platforms at Tel-Aviv University, he openly criticized Israel's actions. "The Lebanon War—from the moral and diplomatic viewpoints as well as from the way it had been waged—is the result of Herut leaders' delusions of grandeur; as such, it found its classic expression in the rhetoric of one of the greatest demagogues in Jewish history, Menachem Begin. He, and the terrifying creature he fostered, launched the IDF on a crusade combining the Star of David and the Phalangist cross, according to a scenario that only a sick imagination could have dreamt up. The crusade failed, and the unholy alliance was doomed before it even began. . . . Only an army whose commanders were devoid of all restraint of conscience and morality, immersed in nationalism and racism, could have ignored its human responsibility and obligation according to the law of nations, in its handling of noncombatant populations in conquered territories—as indeed the IDF has done in this war" (see also Schiff and Yaari 1984).

Yirmiya's verbal and writing style is, as can be seen here, very dramatic. Most of his writings have the flavor of drama. He adds, "the description is ruthless—reality was much more so. This realization is exceedingly hard for someone like myself, who spent his entire life assuring a safe refuge for his sisters and brothers, in absolute faith that my country would be democratic." Later in the same lecture, he pointed out that not all is black:

Throughout this insane war, despite the prevailing spirit of hatred and revenge promoted by the political leaders and high command, there were thousands of soldiers and officers who fought and behaved in a humanitarian way. . . . They looked at the other side and saw not only the enemy,
but also human beings. They distinguished between soldiers and children, between enemy outposts and private homes, and between an unavoidable fighting and a cruel revenge for its own sake. Such was the case of a young paratroop officer at the infamous Place de la Mer in Sidon. Covered with dust, his eyes burning from sleepless nights, facing thousands of detainees, mostly women, children, and elderly, he recognized me and ran toward me shouting: “Dov, do something for these people! Look how they are parched in the sun, thirsty, and hungry. How can you, the military authorities, stand this? How did we become such a cruel army? Yesterday I was fighting in En-Hilwe, and my friend was killed next to me. But I cannot stand this cruelty of ours anymore. We have already divided the little water and food we had, but it was just a drop in the bucket compared to what they need. Please bring at least some drinking water, do something!”

This was what Dov had encountered in the Lebanon War. He saw tens of thousands of refugees, mostly women, children, and elderly people, suffering under horrible conditions, totally dependent on the good, albeit missing, will of the IDF. He left his home town Nahariya, determined to write everything he saw and encountered each day. His political self documented people, events, interactions, decisions, thoughts, and reflections. That notebook became *My War Diary*, a personal and a political document, which was cited in *Ha’aretz* by one book reviewer as the most important book of 1983. Why did Dov write this book? As he put it, “What I saw, experienced, and learned during my tour of duty could not remain my own private property. It was my obligation as a human being, a Jew, a Zionist, and as a soldier in the IDF, to present this information to the public.”

Yirmiya’s main assignment during the Lebanon War was within the Civil Aid Unit, which meant assisting the civilian noncombatant population in burying its dead, renewing water and electricity supplies, distributing food, supplying medical services, finding shelter for families whose homes were destroyed, and getting children back to school. Those most affected by the war were the Palestinians. Most of the men either fled or were held in camps because they were considered PLO members. In the midst of the wrought political situation in Lebanon, the Palestinians were endangered by all ethnic and religious groups. In many cases, the IDF was their only source of security and means of survival.

Dov was in the Lebanon combat zone for only twenty-five days, and wrote seventy pages in the evenings after his tireless work
helping the civilian population. In his diary, Dov bitterly criticizes the Israeli government's policy toward the Palestinian civilians. He documents how high-ranking officers and others in supervisory positions disrupted him and his unit in their effort to help. He describes the daily indifference to human needs. He cites acts and places where various things could have been done to ease people's suffering but were not. In Dov's view, this was intentional. Yirmiya believes that the purpose here was to deny the refugees help in order to coerce them into abandoning their camps and fleeing to the North. He had perpetual conflicts with Israeli figures about his programs and activities. They regarded him as an "Arab-lover" and resented his eagerness to help restore civilian life in the war zone. Dov had particularly bitter conflicts with General Maymon, the military governor of the area.

When the first chapter was published during the war, it moved the country and its consciousness. Dov started to look for informal, personal ways to furnish the refugees with basic necessities such as food, water, clothes, tents, and medicine. He knocked on many doors, wrote to the newspapers and to numerous politicians, called upon friends, organizations, and factories for support. He was the only individual to organize the Israeli-Arab community to help their people, the Palestinians in Lebanon. The results of these intense efforts were indeed remarkable. During the war itself, with the help of family and friends, Dov organized Emergency Aid; clothes, food, and medications were collected from Jews and Arabs in the Galilee. These supplies were transported personally by Dov to Lebanon, and with the help of local people in Lebanon, distributed to those in need. The man devoted himself completely to his work. He was moved, shocked, even horrified by what he saw. The drive to help and rescue was Yirmiya's prime motivation in the twenty-five days he spent on his tour of duty in Lebanon.

Following his activities in Lebanon, from June 6 to July 1, his talks in Israel after his return from reserve duty, and the publication of chapters of his diary in an Israeli newspaper in July of 1982, Dov was expelled from the army on August 5, 1982. He only discovered this decision during a meeting of his military unit when a summary of previous tours of duty was provided in preparation for the next tour of duty planned for August 10. In a personal letter, handed to him by his commander, Dov was severely criticized for the chapters of the diary published in Hotam (July 1982). The commander's letter described the situation in Lebanon from the point
of view of the IDF, justifying the destruction in the Palestinian camps with the claim that the terrorists had scattered among the civilian population. He wrote to Dov, "I sensed, while reading your diary, not only the smell of friendship for the Arabs but for the terrorists as well."

For Yirmiya, this was a most painful moment. In a very degrading way, the IDF had brought a fascinating career of a man to an end. This was not an ordinary citizen, but rather one who, in almost fifty years of service in the military and security forces, was loyal both to his country and to his own human values and beliefs.

But Yirmiya's unqualified decision was to continue his work for the people in Lebanon. After the publication of excerpts from his diary, he became a very controversial figure, occupying center stage. He formed a new organization: Citizens for Humanitarian Aid (CHA) in Lebanon. This was the only voluntary organization that Jews and Arabs formed in cooperation during the Lebanon War.

The organization was active for about fifteen months, until October 1983. During this period, Dov and other activists in the organization went back and forth from the Galilee to Lebanon, encountering hardship and danger. They managed to raise funds and to provide essential help to the Palestinian noncombatant population. Within months, after gathering contributions from kibbutzim, Arab villages, and individuals from all over the country, the CHA committee sent the refugees seventy tons of clothing, including forty-five hundred pairs of children's boots, bed covers, food, medication, and supplies. In addition, the committee raised fifty thousand U.S. dollars with which they bought and delivered ten prefabricated houses to the school in Sidon's Ein Hilwe camp, which had been flattened by IDF bombardments. Dov continued his work until it was impossible to get back to the people: "Then came the guerrilla war and the Israeli evacuation."

The initiation of the committee's activities was inspired by Dov's personal altruistic dimension. Reading his diary, one can sense the care and empathy that characterize all of his activities. The political outcome of Dov's activity in Lebanon was the writing and, eventually, the publication of his diary as a book. Today, in the era of the Intifada, unfortunately, clashes with Palestinians, injury, and death have become daily occurrences. Many of the IDF's activities are controversial within the Israeli society. Dov's book,
published in 1983, can be seen today as a raging prophecy. It was the first book that described the ugly side of the IDF; it was written by a man who grew within the army, and who crushed the myth of "the purity of arms of the IDF" and of Israeli wars as always unavoidable wars. This book was the first to claim that it is not the image of the Israelis but, rather, the real people and their actions that should be the focus of concern. The book was attacked, repudiated, and criticized by numerous IDF and public figures of the Israeli establishment. Furthermore, Yirmiya was personally attacked as an enemy of Israel and described as a man who suffers from the very old Jewish malady: self-hatred. On the other hand, it raised positive and encouraging reactions from many first-rank journalists in daily newspapers and weekly magazines. Similar reactions were expressed by many members of the Knesset, public figures of the Left-Camp, and numerous other readers.

While the political impact of the book is yet to be studied, there is no doubt that it precedes a number of related and significant events. The most dramatic ones were Begin's resignation and self-exile, the beginning of the sarvanut (Linn 1989), and the Yesh-Gvul (There is a limit) movement. Since the Lebanon War, there has been growing support of conscientious objectors—that is, those soldiers who refuse, on moral grounds, to serve in the occupied territories. The book also preceded the rise of Kahane and his group, and the bipolarization of Israeli society. In 1983, three editions of the book appeared in Hebrew and Arabic in Israel. It was then translated into English and published by South End Press in Boston (1983), and by Pluto Press in London (1984). In 1986, the book was translated from English to Italian, and the English version was translated into Arabic and published in Beirut in 1987 and in Israel in 1988. All royalties were donated to the organizations in which Dov is active.

Dov had always perceived himself as a man of action and not a man of words. The Lebanon War and his political orientation led him to become an author and to publish a book; his political self documented his personal altruistic self. This combination became a very powerful personal testimony.

III. THE CRYSTALLIZATION OF A POLITICAL ALTRUIST

Reviewing the files that Dov Yirmiya has been collecting for many years was like entering into and searching among the many layers
of his soul. While reading the material, I kept wondering how it must have felt to have seen a published ad about his own death on April 26, 1948, and then, a day later, the announcement that he was alive but badly wounded. What did it feel like to reread the debates, letters of protest he wrote engulfed by surging emotions, when some of those referred to are already dead? What is his reaction when he reads dramatic claims for socialism and the belief that Stalin was the sun of the nation when he does not believe in it any longer? Over the years, Dov has collected hundreds of newspaper clips, primarily documenting his activities, letters to the editors, and public speeches in Hebrew, English, and Arabic, as if awaiting his biography to be written one day.

Reviewing the titles that other writers had ascribed to him, it became very clear that this man was perceived as a unique and rare individual who has become increasingly scarce in our society. Truly altruistic people are a rare species (Staub 1978; Rushton 1980; Oliner and Oliner 1988) in any society, and due to Israel’s relatively small size, Dov had attracted a great deal of attention. The titles of the many articles written by different journalists at various times consistently reflect the two facets of the man, the activist military man and the dreamer-passionate, empathic human being. For example, Tom Segev of Ha’aretz entitled his article The Good Soul from Nahariya. Paraphrasing Brecht’s play The Good Soul [Woman] of Szechwan, Segev wrote, “Dov Yirmiya is breaking the last taboo; he might be sentenced for advocating sarvanut. Yirmiya, a farmer, a soldier and a musician, the man with a thousand battles could be exceptional story material.” As for his personality, Segev continued, “He hates the slogan ‘shooting and crying,’ he shoots and thinks; old-young, charming and generous, he always fights for his principles and always pays for it.” He concluded the article with, “I tried to convince him to write the story of his life, but Yirmiya said that there are more important things he had to do” (Ha’aretz, March 3, 1988).

Dov refers to his first “shoot and think” incident during the War of Independence (1948), when he was confronted with a moral dilemma of whether or not to overlook a war crime that one of his officers, a close friend, had committed. This young man killed thirty-five Arab civilians who had previously surrendered. After painful deliberations, Dov decided to report the incident, thereby initiating the only military court-martial for such a crime during
that war. The officer was sentenced to a seven-year prison term but was pardoned shortly thereafter.

Avishai Grossman from Al Hamishmar (Mapam daily newspaper) referred to Yirmiya as an officer and a gentleman, and entitled his article “Alone on the Red Line” (July 6, 1988). The political magazine New Outlook of August 1987 described him as “an exemplary model to all peace and justice seekers between nations.” In the consciousness section of the magazine, the article entitled “Dov Kishot,” playing a pun on the literary figure of Don Quixote, depicted the wars Dov waged against people whom he perceived as being destructive to the cause of Jewish-Arab coexistence. In one case, Dov opposed the nomination of General David Maymon as commissioner of the prisons in Israel because this was the man responsible for the IDF handling of the civilian population in the Lebanon War. He was the man who said that “Yirmiya will not set foot on Lebanese soil again” and was behind Yirmiya’s expulsion from the army. Yirmiya felt that it was a disastrous decision to put a man with such an anti-Arab ideology in charge of the prisons in Israel because so many of the inmates were Arabs (Monitit, December 1988). The personal attack against Maymon is only one example of Yirmiya’s personal crusades against those whom he perceived to be detrimental to Jewish-Arab coexistence, and particularly, those treating Arabs in an unjust and discriminating way.

Most of the time, Yirmiya realized that his was a lost battle, but this realization never prevented him from speaking his mind, nor did it attenuate his defiance. He confronted his long-time friend and boss, the late Avraham Yoffe, director of the National Park Service, under whose leadership the Green Patrol banished Arabs from their grazing land. Another target for his offensive was Israel Kenig, former commissioner of the Ministry of the Interior, who was in charge of Arab affairs in northern Israel. For years, Dov vociferously opposed Kenig’s policy and actions and viewed him as a major source of evil. Lastly, Dov condemned Ariel Sharon for his politics and actions in the Lebanon War.

Dov is never reluctant to voice his opinions with Jews and Arabs alike. His writing style has always been prophetic and full of conviction. In a dramatic manner, Dov expresses his thoughts in black and white. He never conceals his emotions and involvement. At the same time, he has a very charming and humble disposition.
Reviewing his files, I read many letters to the editor and short articles sent to newspapers and returned to him with one excuse or another as to why the newspaper declined to publish the material. Even when published, his writings have been sometimes revised and subduced. Yet, Dov has not been discouraged from continuing his struggle against injustice. The articles written about him never neglected to mention the fact that he had been a high-ranking officer in the IDF. One can recall that Yirmiya completed his service as a career officer in 1958, and yet in The Jerusalem Post of May 1988, the article reads, “Colonel admits to urging soldiers to refuse to serve in the territories.” The adjectives colonel (Sgan-Aluf) and ex-officer have always been associated with his name and activities. Indeed, in Israel one’s army rank is usually associated with the person. This is particularly evident in the case of high-ranking officers, mainly generals, who hold prominent public positions as civilians. In Dov’s case, it was usually noted in order to emphasize his criticism of the IDF and his involvement in the peace camp.

One of the best descriptions of Yirmiya was written by Menachem Golan in Maar’iv on October 8, 1982. The article, titled “Persona non Grata,” evokes an emotional and painful reaction to Yirmiya’s expulsion from the army. This was still a time when Yirmiya refrained from openly attacking the IDF. Golan quotes Yirmiya as saying, “Yes, I will volunteer in the future, and will ask to serve in the IDF wherever it goes. It is my army and my country, and no one will take them from me. I gave them my whole life.” Note, however, that since the Intifada broke out, Yirmiya has no longer abided by his own words.

Between 1967 and 1979 Dov documented the bulk of his activities himself. There were only a few clippings from 1967 to 1978, but since 1979 his files have grown to include hundreds of documents. Dov’s explanation as to this discrepancy was that only after his retirement in 1978–1979 did he find the time to write so many letters and responses to the press, and to organize his files. However, knowing Dov, I think that consciously or unconsciously he is more at peace with the last ten to twenty years of his life than with the years prior to 1970. After talking with Dov, I was under the impression that he is restructuring his own vision of his life.

Another issue relevant to Dov’s emergence as a political activist is his political affiliation. All his life Dov declared himself a member of Mapam, at one time the most leftist Socialist-Zionist party.
In the thirties and forties, Mapam was very dogmatic and in line with Russian ideology. Yet, the party could not be considered Communist because of its particular Zionist ideology that espoused the vision of a binational Jewish-Arab state based on the principles of parity. Like many leftists of this era, Dov was torn between the utopian ideas of justice, equality, and social rights of the Socialist ideology, which are still important to him, and the sharp and bitter disillusionment with reality. Dov remained formally and ritualistically loyal to Mapam, but he frowns upon its loss of direction. His disappointment with the party led him to search for alternative modes of operation outside the narrow and confining party line, focusing on practical Jewish-Arab cooperation as delineated throughout this chapter.

**IV. REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

I have known Dov since 1963. Listening to him and observing his actions, I am amazed at the intensity of his emotional experiences, the extent of his responsiveness to other human beings, and the profundity of his concern with significant issues. These qualities have surfaced repeatedly in Dov's actions. At the age of seventy-five, Dov views his life in its entirety as consistent with his beliefs and values. Even when he fought the Arabs in 1948, he claims that he always believed in the right of the two nations to exist.

While attempting to clarify a few points, I asked Yirmiya what he perceives to be the most important things he has done in his life. His answer came somewhat unexpectedly. For him the fact that he was a farmer, a man who toiled the land, sowing and reaping, was very important. As he put it, "I was always in touch with my body and soul as a child at Ba’it Gan, and a farmer in Nahalal from 1920 to 1938." The second most significant thing, in Dov's opinion, is the fact that he lived on a kibbutz, the most utopian socialist way of life, and the most unique form of life the Israeli society has created (Talmon-Garber 1970). I found this answer to reflect Dov's close affinity to the most central and sacred values and visions of the Jewish-Zionist movement—the revival of the land and the creation of a just society on the kibbutz.

When I asked Yirmiya what he was most disappointed about at this stage of his life, he replied in a philosophical way: "the body [organism] wears out, and the rest is down hill. I cannot stop thinking about how short life is." He added, "I am disappointed
with the fact that a single lifetime is too short to realize the fulfillment and attainment of one's truly most valued ideas. When I reflect on what happened to socialism and communism, and the transformation of Zionism in the twentieth century, I think that there is no future or hope for mankind. Many have told me that I am a pessimist, and I think that indeed I am."

In his usual dramatic tone Dov went on.

You asked me why I continue to do what I do and why I am still so active. The answer is very complicated. First of all, it is the lust for life, to be alive. If you refrain from doing things in which you believe, you may indeed shorten the process [of life]. I do all of those things for Arabs because they are the underdogs. They suffer from the fact that we attained our dream and they did not. I was always attracted to them and to their lifestyle. As a child in Nahalal, I truly thought about them as my brothers, and always believed that Zionism would benefit them as well. With all my heart I believed that we would learn what we could from each other, and that after 1947, two states would eventually be created here, one for them and one for us. I learned their language, their culture, and their ways of life. I was not the only one to hold these beliefs; many of the Halutzim, while defending Jewish communities against Arab attacks in times of bloody uprising of the Arabs against the British and their Zionist proteges, still believed in future coexistence of Jews and Arabs in this country.

As a youngster, Dov said he was also very attracted to communism, and to the Socialist-Zionist ideology. He felt confident that communism would solve all nationalistic conflicts, including ours. He concluded that "it was only later, when all the horrors of Stalin were uncovered, that I finally detached myself from the Communist ideology although I still think that some elements of it are truthful. This disappointment just added to my pessimistic view of human nature."

Yirmiya ponders whether he really is biased and partial towards the Arabs, as even his wife says he sometimes is. Indeed, it looks as if he has more Arab friends than Jewish ones, at least in the political realm. Dov admits that he is not able to analyze his motives, and that some probably stem from his childhood, family structure, and relationships. "But I do know one thing," he adds, "I feel an obligation to work for the Arab cause because the great majority of Jews do not. That's why I stand in the stead of one hundred thousand Jews who do not lift a finger to help the Arabs in their plight. Perhaps others feel the way I do but do nothing about it. What I am doing is in my name as well as theirs."
Analyzing the years that have passed since 1948, Dov thinks that Israeli Jews have committed many immoral acts toward the Arabs. Dov says he feels the guilt of Israel’s actions. He internalized ideas and writings of authors like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, as well as his father and his admired and beloved schoolteacher. He hates nationalism, when it means superiority of people and nations over others. Yirmiya made it clear that he never adopted the main Jewish ideology that Jews are “the chosen people,” a view he holds in no small measure due to this father’s way of thinking. He never revered people because they were Jewish nor considered himself unique because he was one.

I feel that Jewish-Arab coexistence is the most crucial issue in our own existence as people and as a nation. If we do not learn to do the fair and just thing, which is to recognize the right of the Palestinians to realize their national, cultural, and individual independence, I am convinced that we will not be able to maintain ours either. This idea motivates me to do everything I can in order to prevent the moral, and eventually, the physical destruction of our dream as a people.

I asked Yirmiya why he has always been working in the periphery of the political realm and why he has never pushed himself to become a central political figure, within Mapam, the party with which he has been affiliated. Why is he a Don Quixote type? Yirmiya’s answer was twofold. First of all, he had come to recognize that even Mapam does not respond seriously enough when it comes to the Arab issue, and he had found many contradictions, even hypocrisy, in their ideology and actions. He said he could not join Rakach, which is the Communist party, because of his painful disillusionment with Russia, and because of the party’s dogmatism. However, he did not reject their people as individuals when they joined in activities against racism or for aid in Lebanon. On the contrary, Yirmiya always succeeded in assembling people from diverse organizations, parties, and groups, who would not otherwise talk to each other, let alone cooperate in a political activity.

Secondly, the reason why Yirmiya never assumed the role of political leadership is tied to his own self-perception as a man not molded to become a politician. He thinks very modestly about himself. Yirmiya definitely recognizes his talents in motivating and mobilizing people but thinks he lacks the intellectual scope needed to become a national leader.

Yirmiya reflects on his life with modesty, uncertainty, searching
for answers. He sees many of his one-time partners in action, soldiers under his command, friends, and acquaintances who now belong to the establishment, occupying significant positions and enjoying their accompanying and derived benefits. Nevertheless, Yirmiya deeply despises them for not remaining loyal and truthful to the ideals they once held, at the time when both they and the state were young and pure.

Yet, Dov is aware of the fact that his activities have endowed him with status, reputation, and the admiration of those people and groups he values, although they sometimes oppose the way in which he tries to enact his ideas. At the end of our conversation, he said,

You ask what drives me. Aren’t we all driven by fear of a dog, fear of darkness, fear of a bullet, fear of death and mortality? I know that what I demand of others, I first demand of myself. I was frightened when I was beaten, interrogated by the police, or when I participated in radical activities that could invoke violent reactions. Yet, at these times, I felt as if I were again a commander in the War of 1948, leading the troops and calling, “follow me.” Sometimes I expect that there are hundreds of people behind me, but in fact, there may be only a few, or I may even be alone.

V. A THEORETICAL SUMMARY OF A POLITICAL ALTRUIST

Reviewing the literature on altruism, one finds a growing body of literature that describes helping and virtuous behavior of individuals in times of catastrophe, such as the Holocaust era. These are individuals who saved the lives of others at a high risk to themselves. Much of this literature attempts to characterize the personality of the rescuers (see Oliner and Oliner 1988; London 1970; Huneke 1985–1986; Wundheiler 1985–1986). On the other hand, there is a vast body of literature that describes political activists in various settings. One example is the book on Jews, Christians, and the New Left (Rothman and Lichter 1982). These analyses usually focus on puzzling questions: what makes those people be who they are? What is the interface of personality and ideology? Usually, the answers are found within the theoretical framework of deepset aspects of intrapsychic functioning and family relations. Other analyses are based on sociopsychological theoretical concepts such as social marginality (London 1970).

Dov’s life combines the altruist and political activist in a way that unfolds a different type of altruist, not described or discussed
earlier in the literature. In certain respects, Dov cannot be analyzed merely according to the profile of the altruist-rescuer who saved the lives of Jews during an era of homicide on a scale never before imagined (Kohn 1989). Neither can he be analyzed only according to psychological profiles of a political activist. Dov conforms to the definition of an altruist (see Eisenberg 1986, 210) as "a person whose behavior is motivated by (1) empathy, (2) self-evaluative emotions associated with specific internalized moral values and norms and one's responsibility to act in accordance with these values or norms, (3) cognitions concerning those values, and . . . (4) cognitions and accompanying affect... related to self-evaluation vis-à-vis one's moral self-image" (Eisenberg 1986, 210). Dov's life has focused on helping a group of people, in this case the Arabs, and for almost fifty years, he did so in various ways. He has, in many respects, a one-track mind, devoting most of his energy to the issues he had cognitively decided were fundamental.

In order to understand Dov's life in a theoretical framework, I draw on concepts of personality boundaries within the unique Israeli context (Shalit 1987). I will also draw on action theories, since I view Dov as an action-oriented altruist. Action in the Israeli context means politics, and politics for Dov is affected by Marxism, which also shaped the basic concepts of action theory (see Von Cranach and Harré 1982). Included in the action theory are some social-drama concepts in which Dov is the actor; he is fully aware of the stage, role, text, and impact of his actions, and uses it to rewrite or restage some of the scenes in the Jewish-Arab drama (Harré 1979).

When analyzing Dov's personality, it is essential to understand that the Israeli existential condition is unique. As suggested by Shalit (1987), the Israeli represents a person who is the product of close proximity between personal and collective boundaries (375). There is always a deep sense of anxiety and fear of extinction—fear of both physical and national extinction. The syndrome, characterized by Holocaust survivors, is intensified by tens of millions of Arabs who continue to threaten the existence of the Israeli Jews. The role of that anxiety in the collective boundaries of the Israeli Jews, and Jews everywhere, affects pragmatic politics in Israel (Kelman 1987). The post-Holocaust syndrome is a perpetual element of daily life here, just like the air we breathe and the streets we walk.

This unique setting has a profound impact on many Israelis, and
in this context, Dov represents the majority. In 1948, the newly born fragile nation was forced to fight for its existence; an individual’s personal boundaries were in full accord with the necessity to change the geographical borders—that is, to establish a geographical region for the collective Jewish nation (Shalit 1987). This necessity led to a war that had a traumatic outcome for the Arabs. At that time, in 1948, we Israelis, including Dov, as well as the rest of the world, thought that that war and the change in geographical borders were inevitable outcomes of what was believed to be a moral act. Subsequent wars—Sinai (1956), Six-Day (1967), Littani operation (1978), and Lebanon (1982)—led many people to experience a dissonance between the personal and the collective boundaries.

Gradually, these changes made people like Dov question the legitimacy of Israel’s acts, and the morality of its policies, and recognize the injustices inherent in the continuous flux in our collective self. Dov’s inner self came to be in bitter and painful conflict with his collective self. For Dov, both the Littani operation and the Lebanon War were somewhat of a traumatic recurrence of the 1948 war. He again encountered the people the Palestinians, who were exiled in 1948. From his personal entries in his diary, it is evident that he could not separate the 1982 events from those in 1948. He became increasingly distressed and disturbed by what he saw; the same people and their offspring were still there, suffering and being denied their basic human rights. Yirmiya’s analysis of the situation implies that the Israeli government was still treating these people as terrorists. It is my hypothesis that many conflicts that Yirmiya had experienced earlier turned into anger and rage in Lebanon. His ability to analyze sociopolitical processes within a Marxist frame of thinking, and his strong sense of morality and justice, led Dov to become a Sarvan (a conscientious objector), commending the morality of refusing to serve in the occupied territories.

Due to the proximity between individual and social processes in Israel, everyone takes a position on the current sociopolitical situation. Dov’s position is described in this chapter as a unique combination of a political, collective, as well as a personal, altruistic self. Thus, the fact that Yirmiya’s most outstanding actions occurred in Lebanon indicates that he was driven by guilt and shame for the collective Israeli society, who had again expanded
its geographic borders and harmed the Palestinians. Dov expresses this very clearly when he says that he acts not only for himself but also for a hundred thousand Jews who do not share his views and concerns and do not extend their help to those in need.

An analysis of human behavior according to a social drama model (Harré 1979) has shed light on the Jewish-Arab conflict (Hertz-Lazarowitz 1988). According to this analysis, Yirmiya is a key actor in a drama that results directly from a troubled socio-political reality; this drama has been playing on our region’s stage for over one hundred years, and for Dov, almost seventy years. With heightened awareness and great determination, he decides on the roles, texts, and stages on which he will perform. As Dov’s life unfolds, it resembles a fascinating drama with many theatrical features. At different phases, Yirmiya has made some dramatic moves, for example, breaking the “taboo” of speaking with members of the PLO, traveling to Romania, and meeting with “delegitimized others” (Bar-Tal 1988). His style of speaking and writing is theatrical. He still dresses and behaves much like the 1948 Israelis (Elon 1972). He was proclaimed dead and is still alive. He has led a grandiose life story laced with love, hate, jealousy, devotion, and unexpected turns that marked his personal as well as his public self. On the one hand, he plays the prophet, and on the other, the cohen who does the holy work (Avodat Kodesh). Von Cranach and Harré (1982) view action as serving to maintain the actor’s self by adapting to the demands of his environment (76) (see also Eisenberg 1986, 26–29).

Mario Von Cranach and Harré (1982) introduced the term action in the following manner: “Our key concept is that of action (Handlen, in Hebrew; Peula, Bizua). By that we mean a type of behavior that is, at least partially, consciously directed towards a planned and intentional goal. The word ‘conscious’ is intended to express the fact that the subjective experiences, accessible to the doer himself, and related to the action, are associated with the objective performance of the action; the action is represented in a cognitive manner . . . we do not expect all parts of action to be conscious” (16–17).

Dov represents a man of action and perceives himself as such. The fact that he directs all his actions toward being a political altruist, concerned with the Palestinian/Arabs’ plight, may be the result of his own self-reflection and cognitive analysis that have
gradually shaped his political thinking. The Israeli sociopolitical drama is forever changing, which no doubt impacts the processes of thought and action.

Certain psychological theories teach us that individuals may displace their own conflicts on the political level. This chapter describes a complex man engulfed by both internal and external conflicts, who nevertheless maintains his basic value system and integrity. It is yet to be determined which theory best explains the man. In my opinion, Dov is a highly emotional person with a strong drive to promote justice and equality in society as a whole. He is blessed with a tremendous ability to organize and activate people. Consciously or unconsciously, he decided to work for what he thinks is the most crucial issue facing the state of Israel, which is the coexistence of Jews and Arabs, and to do so not through large organizations such as political parties, but through small, mobile, and dynamic organizations that are immune to corruption.

Thus, the profile of the man and the evolution of his political altruism may be characterized by the following elements: Dov works for and with people, mainly Arab and pro-Arab Jews. His relationships with those people are long-term. He continues to be a close, reliable friend who is there, ready to help. Dov mobilizes himself and others to participate in ad hoc activities dealing with crucial, traumatic, and acute problems. Those activities are performed in small organizations that open new paths for addressing acute problems. Some of these activities have been subsequently adapted and extended by political parties or well-established organizations, such as actions against the military rule and the Green Patrol, his establishment of the Committee against Racism and the "Red Line"—Jews and Arabs against occupation—and, more recently, his participation in the delegation to Romania to meet the PLO. Yirmiya, in his action, was ahead of the people and of his time. It took the Israeli society years to get to the same point that he had reached much earlier.

On a personal level, Dov manifests most of the characteristics of an altruist: empathy, the ability to assume the perspective of another person or group of people, the concern for the needs and plight of others, and the natural ability to extend himself to others. He thinks of helping as the proper thing to do, without viewing it as an outstanding act; he feels he does what has to be done.

Yirmiya wants his life to be purposeful and is forever examining himself. He is aware of mortality and frightened by it on an
existential-philosophical level. For observers like myself and for others with whom I talked about Yirmiya, he is becoming increasingly critical (some say extremely so) of Israeli society and the Zionist dream, but still dreams and fights for its moral actualization.

Moral beliefs are central to Dov's actions and thinking. Each and every day, he combines his caring commitment to people with his commitment to abstract principles of justice, equality, moral conduct, and humanism.

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