To: The Center for Medical Humanities

The Department of History of Science and Ideas

Uppsala University

Haifa, May 10, 2020

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for the postdoctoral position in Medical Humanities at the Department of History of Science and Ideas at Uppsala University. I received my PhD in February 2020 from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I specialize in the history of neurosciences and psychology, especially in the Soviet social, political, and cultural context. My dissertation focused on the early intellectual biography of Alexander Luria and his role in the development of the Vygotsky-Luria circle, also know as the “cultural-historical school” of psychology, and in the formation of neuropsychology as a field in the Soviet Union.

I used the story of Alexander Luria as a case study to show the complex relationship between the various characteristics that shape the creation of scientific ideas and knowledge. I am particularly interested in what may be called the dual nature of science: science as a social institution that is embedded in local social practices, politics, and ideology, and science as a transnational phenomenon with a common ethos and circulation of knowledge. My proposed future project is, to some extent, a continuation and extension of my previous research. It focuses on the transnational history of Soviet neuropsychology, especially on Luria’s version of it, and its dissemination during the Cold War era, mainly in the UK and North America. See the attached research proposal for details.

I am highly motivated and believe I can contribute significantly to your department and to the Center for Medical Humanities in particular. My research interests include the history of neurology and psychology in their theoretical, clinical, and social contexts. Fundamental questions about human nature, brain and mind relations, and heredity versus environment in developmental processes are crucial to our understanding of diseases and treatment strategies in the field of mental health. The case of Soviet neuropsychology is particularly interesting in this context, due to the internal tension between the desire (and need) to grasp the human psyche materially, which was understood as based on the neurological activity of the brain, without reducing it to biology alone. In addition, the Soviet sociopolitical setting offers a complex yet understudied comparison to the Western liberal context, thus providing a fascinating perspective for understanding science and medicine. Hopefully, these and other issues related to Soviet science will contribute to discussions among faculty members and students and will enrich our understanding of the transnational processes of creating scientific and clinical knowledge.

Thank you for considering my application.

Best regards,

Dr. Eli Lamdan