**Statement on Research and Teaching Interests**

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**Research Agenda**

I am a historian of science focusing on the history of neuroscience and psychology, especially in the Soviet social, political, and cultural context. My interest in psychology and neuroscience has been sparked by the complex relationship between these two fields and by how they approach different aspects of fundamental questions about human nature, the relationship between brain and mind, the relationship between heredity and environment, and more. These questions are not narrowly scientific, but also encompass philosophical considerations, ideological positions, and general worldviews. Consequently, answers to these questions are embedded in the socio-cultural context of particular societies.

My research is based on the premise that science can be understood better as a binary activity, with a certain tension between its two poles. At one pole, the local, science is a particular social institution that maintains a relationship with the political power, internalizes social values, and responds to society's needs. At the opposing, universal, pole, science is an intellectual activity engaged in by a transnational professional community. In this community, scientists seek recognition and status, and act according to an ethos wherein aspirations and efforts to obtain objective knowledge hold a central position. The Soviet Union is particularly interesting in this regard, because the tension between the local and the universal aspects of science was visible, acute, and sometimes even fruitful in the country. On the one hand, the Soviet government expressed its goal of establishing a new science based on Marxist philosophy and the new social order (at least the idealized one). On the other hand, there was recognition among the majority of Soviet scientists and policymakers of the continuity, and even common ground, between Soviet scientists and their colleagues from the “bourgeois” world.

This analysis served as the basis framework for my dissertation, *Alexander Luria's Path to Neuropsychology: Transnational Science in Soviet Context*, which focused on the early intellectual biography of Alexander Luria and his role in the development of the Vygotsky-Luria circle, also known as the “cultural-historical school” of psychology, and on Luria's contribution to the formation of neuropsychology as a field in the Soviet Union. Luria's approach to (neuro)psychology emphasizes the hierarchical and organized structure of psychological processes and the brain structures that mediate them, as well as the social, language-based source of human consciousness.

My dissertation is one of the very few dedicated to Luria's intellectual biography, notwithstanding his important contributions, and, as far as I can discern, is the only one relying on archival materials from Luria's personal collection. It proposes that Luria’s scientific project can best be understood in the context of the dual context discussed above. In the local dimension, his scientific project was deeply rooted in Soviet discourse and influenced by political and social events that occurred during the formation of the Soviet Union. His conception of humanity, which is essentially cultural and social, was rooted in the Marxist worldview and the discourse of the “New Soviet Man” prevalent in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. Nevertheless, it is impossible to understand Luria’s scientific project without recognizing its transnational dimension. Luria, from his earliest days as a researcher, understood science as a universal human activity, and he consistently sought contact with his Western counterparts. Psychoanalysis, and later, the Gestalt school, were sources of inspiration and dialogue for Luria. This interchange with Western thought positioned Luria within a group of Soviet scientists and intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s that served as a bridge between the Soviet scientific community and their Western colleagues.

This dissertation has already produced some published materials (please see my CV), and I currently have two papers under preparation. The first examines Luria's early engagement with psychoanalysis as a case study of the fate of this discipline in the Soviet Union in order to show that its decline was not only directly connected to politics and ideology, but also had more complex socio-intellectual roots. The second paper under preparation explores Luria's hierarchical conception of the structure of the brain and the mind, and the roots of his thinking in both holistic psychology, especially Gestalt theory, and the dominant socio-economic models of Soviet ideology and reality.

My most recent research project addresses the transnational history of Soviet psychology and neuroscience during the Cold War era. Part of this research will enable me to expand my dissertation and convert it into a book on Luria's neuropsychology through the prism of the dissemination of knowledge. On a broader level, I am interested in the wide network of Soviet and Western scientists and scholars, in their respective intellectual, political, and social contexts, that was engaged in disseminating Soviet psychology in English-speaking countries (the United Kingdom and North America) in the context of the cognitive trend in psychology and the neurosciences. Among the issues to be explored in the Soviet realm are the role Soviet psychologists and neuroscientists may have played in cultural diplomacy, as well as how these Soviet-Western contacts affected internal Soviet rivalries and controversies, such as those surrounding the attempted "Pavlovization" of Soviet psychology. The primary questioned regarding the Western scientists and scholars revolves around their motivations for bringing Soviet scientific knowledge to their cultural and social milieus and its reception there. What were their political, social and intellectual purposes with respect to practical fields, such as medicine and education, as well as basic science (especially in the context of the cognitive trend in psychology)? In addition, I am interested in the differing concepts of "self" and subjectivity in these very divergent political and cultural contexts. For example, there is much in common, at least at first glance, between the Soviet concept of "personality" and the Western liberal notion of "open-minded self." Both emphasize activity, consciousness, and creativity, and more. Comparing the two viewpoints can both raise and elucidate a number of questions regarding the nature of these rival ideologies and societies, their similarities and differences, as well as forgotten or abandoned paths in understanding "human nature."

**Teaching Interest**

Having received training in both science and humanities, I have learned to regard science from a variety of perspectives. During my graduate studies in Biology, I enjoyed the challenging and rewarding experience of serving as a teaching assistant for courses at both the Hebrew University and the University of Haifa, teaching the basics of cell biology and biochemistry.

Although over the last few years my professional path has taken me in a different direction, I certainly consider teaching as one of the most important responsibilities, if not privileges, of an academic. First, teaching represents the mission of imparting critical thinking, knowledge, and analytical tools to new students, thus enabling them to become independent thinkers and researchers. Teaching also serves a critical function of creating a dialogue with the students that can enrich both parties. Having had the great fortune of learning from and working with inspiring teachers who believed in me, I now would like to be able to encourage and have a significant impact on other students, especially those, who, like myself, come from the social periphery.

In addition to a general introduction to the History and Sociology of Sciences (or Science, Technology and Society) that I have prepared, I am interested in teaching at least two courses related to my research interests. The first, possibly entitled "Soviet Science? The History of Science in the Soviet Union," will examine the institutional and intellectual history of Soviet science in fields such as physics, biology, psychology, and linguistics. The course will discuss the ways in which developments in these fields have been influenced by the social and political processes in the Soviet Union and how Soviet science has been integrated into the broader framework of transnational science.

Another course being considered is the "History of Psychology: Science in Perpetual Crisis?" which will cover the history of theories and practices of psychology, which, since its inception, has been torn between the natural and the social and human sciences. This course will try to explicate the complex connections between psychology as a science and applied fields, such as mental health and education, as well as between them and the changing cultural perceptions of "human nature."