***Statement on Research and Teaching Interests***

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**Research agenda**

I am an historian of science who specialize in the history of neurosciences and psychology, especially in the Soviet social, political, and cultural context. My interest in psychology and neuroscience stems from the fact that these two fields of knowledge have a complex relationship between them and deal with different aspects of the 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 questions, but also involve philosophical considerations, ideological position and general worldview. As such, answers to them are embedded in socio-cultural context of particular societies. My premise is that science can be understood better as a dual activity with a certain tension between its two poles. At one pole, the local, science is a particular social institution that maintains relationship with the political power, internalize social values and response to society's needs. At the other, universal pole, science is an intellectual activity of a trans-national professional community, within which scientists seek recognition and status, and also, among other things, act according to the ethos in which there is a central place for aspirations and attempts to achieve objective knowledge. The Soviet Union is particularly interesting in this context, because the tension between these two aspects of science there was visible, acute and sometimes even fruitful. On the one hand, the stated goal was to establish a new science, based on Marxist philosophy and the new social order (at least the imaginary one). On the other hand, there was recognition among the majority of scientists and policymakers that there would be continuity, and even a common ground, between Soviet scientists and their colleagues from the old bourgeois world.

This approach guided me in 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 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) and the social, language-based source of human consciousness.

As I showed in my dissertation, one of the very few dedicated to Luria's intellectual biography and as far as I know the only one relying on archival materials from Luria's personal collection, Luria’s scientific project can best be understood in the dual framework mentioned above. In the local dimension, his scientific project was deeply rooted in Soviet discourse and influenced by political and social events during the formation of the Soviet Union. His conception of humanity, which is essentially cultural and social, was rooted in the Marxist world view and the discourse of the “New Soviet Man” prevalent in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, it is impossible to understand Luria’s scientific project without its transnational dimension. Luria, from his earliest days as a researcher, understood science as a universal human activity, and he 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 already produced some published materials (see my CV) Currently I have two papers under preparation. The first will discuss 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 has more complex socio-intellectual roots. The second paper under preparation will discuss Luria's conception of hierarchical organization of brain and mind and its roots both in holistic psychology, especially the Gestalt theory, and socio-economic models dominated in Soviet ideology and reality.

My new research project deals with the transnational history of Soviet psychology neuroscience during the Cold War era. Part of this research will help me to expand my dissertation and elaborate it into a book on Luria's neuropsychology through the prism of circulation of knowledge. In more general terms, I am interested in a wide network of Soviet and Western scientists and scholars, in its intellectual, political, and social contexts, on both the Soviet and the Western sides, that was engaged in dissemination of Soviet psychology in English-speaking countries (the UK and North America) in the context of the cognitive turn in psychology and the neurosciences. On the Soviet side, I am interested in the potential place of Soviet psychologist and neuroscientists in cultural diplomacy. Another interesting issue is the place of this Soviet-Western contacts in internal rivalries and controversies, for example around attempts of "Pavlovization" of Soviet psychology. On the Western side, I am interested in motivations of some scientists and scholars to bring Soviet scientific knowledge to their cultural and social context and its reception there. What where their political, social and intellectual purposes regarding practical fields, like medicine and education, and basic science (especially in the context of the cognitive turn in psychology). In addition, I am interested in in various concepts of "self" and subjectivity in these political and cultural contexts. For example, there is much in common, at least at first glance, between the liberal "open-minded self" and the Soviet notion of "personality." Both emphasize activity, consciousness and creativity and so on. This comparation can open various questions regarding the nature of the rival ideologies and societies, similarities and differences, as well as forgotten and neglected paths in understanding "human nature."

**Teaching interest:**

As a person who has received training both in science and humanities, I have learned to look at science from different perspectives. During my graduate studies in Biology, I served as teaching assistant at both the Hebrew University and the University of Haifa. I these courses I taught basics in cell biology and biochemistry and it was a challenging and rewarding experience.

Although for some years my professional path took me to a different direction, I certainly see teaching as one of the most important tasks of an academic. First of all, the mission of imparting critical thinking, knowledge, and analytical tools to new students that will allow them become independent thinkers and researchers. It is also important to create a bilateral dialogue with the students, a dialogue which will enrich both parties. Parting from my personal experience as a student who had the privilege of having inspiring teachers who believed in me, I want to be significant to my students, especially in encouraging those coming from a social periphery like myself.

In addition to general introduction to History and Sociology of Sciences (or Science. Technology and Society) that I prepared to teach, I plan at least two courses related to my research interests. The first might be named "Soviet Science? The History of Science in the Soviet Union". The course 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 possible course is "History of Psychology: Science in Perpetual Crisis?" The course will deal with the history of theories and practices of psychology, which since its inception has been torn between the natural sciences and the social and human sciences. We will try to understand 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".