מכון ויצמן למדע
WEIZMANN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

The Braginsky Center for the Interface between the Sciences and the Humanities

TUESDAY
DECEMBER 3, 2019
AT 15:00
EBNER AUDITORIUM

invites you to a lecture by

Yadin Dudai
Department of Neurobiology | Weizmann Institute of Science

The Science of Memory and the Mechanisms of Mnemohistory[1]

- or, the fate of Jewish memory over >3300 yrs

Clio, Muse of History. Trier, Roman Mosaic Museum

From the vantage point of the Science of Memory, human cultures can be considered as 'biocultural supraorganisms' that can store distributed experience-dependent representations over hundreds and thousands of years. I will describe cognitive and artefactual instruments that mediate encoding, consolidation, storage and retrieval of such cross-generational collective engrams in large human populations. Investigation of this type of long-duration memory is made possible by combining archeology, history and cognitive science. The memory of the Jewish culture will be considered as a model system. It can be traced back ca. 3300 yr (i.e. ca. 130 generations) ago. Its earliest identified core element seems to have amalgamated fact with fiction in its first ca. 1000 yrs before being put in writing ca. 2300 yrs ago in an information-dense text of only 63 Hebrew words. Its high-fidelity persistence relied on evolving procedural reactivations. Potential implications of this persistence mechanism for understanding remote memory in individuals will be discussed. In recent generations reactivation of this memory and its updating play a role in splitting Jewish cultural memory into sub-narratives that differ, inter alia, in geographical distribution and cultural signature. This enables data-based analysis of ongoing transformation of collective memory in large distributed human populations.

[1] Mnemohistory: Factual/fictional history as it is remembered

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Light refreshment will be served before the lecture