ELSC Seminar: Yoram Eshet
March 20, 2014

On the topic of: "A Shattered World: Brain injury, trauma and memory"

ELSC cordially invite you
to the lecture given by:

Yoram Eshet
Open University

On the topic of:

"A Shattered World: Brain injury, trauma and memory"

The lecture will be held on Thursday, March 20, 2014
at 17:00, at ELSC: Silverman Bldg., 3rd Wing, 6th Floor, Edmond J. Safra Campus

Light refreshments at 16:45

Abstract:

The multi-dimensional characteristics of severe traumatic brain injuries are usually associated with shattering most of the basic assumptions of the injured people about their cognitive, emotional and social capabilities and with dramatic changes in self-perception. Coping with such traumatic experiences requires an effective construction of new narratives, assuming that in the process of identity construction, people thrive for creating narratives that help them find meaning in their traumatic experiences.

Most of the cognitive and sociological damages caused by brain injuries are not obvious "at first glance", to both the injured and to the medical staff. In order to cope with such ambiguous situation, the injured person must "launch" a lifetime odyssey of self-study, in order to map, identify, and define the trauma's scope and to develop strategies that help coping with its consequences and in constructing personal viewpoints towards the trauma? an act which requires a high level of introspective capabilities. Unfortunately, the brain-damage paradox lies with the fact that in most severe brain injuries, the introspective and self-awareness capabilities are damaged, a fact that poses major hurdles to the ability of the injured person in dealing effectively with the traumatic experience. Therefore, there is great importance for narratives of people that went through severe traumatic brain damage experiences, narratives which can improve our understanding of rehabilitation and reconstruction processes that follow such traumas.

These processes will be discussed in the present lecture, from the lecturer's personal perspective. The lecturer suffers from a severe brain injury and PTSD from the Yom Kippur War. Besides PTSD, the injury caused paralysis and partial blindness, but a most significant damage lies in the loss of a wide range of
cognitive capabilities (e.g. loss of spatial orientation, erasing parts of the memory and losing the ability to read and to make basic math calculations). The lecture is a "summary" of a 38-years self-study of the author's post-traumatic experience. It is based on the analysis of post trauma processes and of memory, cognition and identity reconstruction, as described in the author's recent book "A Man Walks Home" (Keter Publishers, 2010). The book portrays a psychological journey into the depths of post-trauma, brain injury and of gaining ownership on post traumatic experiences with the aid of narrative writing tools. The lecture is based on the Interpretative-Phenomenological methodology, and its goal is to examine narrative patterns which are typical of identity and meaning reconstruction processes after severe traumatic experiences. Narrative writing is presented as a powerful mechanism in making post-traumas psychologically-accessible and in regaining control on the life of the injured person.

About the presenter

Yoram Eshet suffers from a severe right-parietal brain injury that caused a left-lateral paralysis and a loss of the visual lateral fields, together with PTSD and a wide range of cognitive skills, such as spatial orientation, reading, short-term memory and mathematical thinking. Today he is the director of the Research Center for Innovation in Learning Technologies, and the Head of the M.A Program in Educational Technologies, The Open University of Israel. He is also a Ph.D. in geology, and for over a decade he served as a senior researcher at the Geological Survey of Israel and as a scientist in a hi-tech company that developed computer-based learning environments.

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