The Implications of Anomalous Monism for Intimate Selves

Gabriel Levy
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) Trondheim, Norway

“To achieve intimacy, one must first be oriented to value and seek closeness. Second, one must be able to tolerate and even embrace the intense emotions that are inextricably part of close relationships and be able to share emotional experiences freely. Finally, one must be capable of self-disclosure, mutual reciprocity, sensitivity to the feelings of the other, and concern for the other’s well-being” (Collins and Stroufe 1999, 127; cit. in: Bartz 2011, 716)

This chapter examines the relationship between intimacy and the self. I utilize one of the paradigmatic narratives about intimacy, an extremely liquid story from the Bible about the first human couple, Adam and Eve, to explore some of the theoretical baggage in the concept of intimacy. I present a way to make sense of intimacy from the perspective of Donald Davidson’s anomalous monism. Davidson argued convincingly that, although the first-person has a certain kind of authority in ascribing mental states to him or herself, the concept of the self is irreducible because it is grounded in intersubjectivity (Davidson 2001). Since intimacy requires a sense of ownership of the subjective self, this can lead to problems within a Davidsonian framework, in which the intersubjective level is often prioritized. Taking the subjective perspective seriously from a Davidsonian point of view requires a radical subjectivity that even takes the conference ASASE where these ideas were presented into account, since the scholar writing this paper is undeniably also a subject. This was a conference I attended in Lisbon in May 2013 on the subject of the altered self. Academic conferences are places where ideas come together, but -at least as importantly- they are sites where intimacy can take place, where selves meet intimately. In this way, this chapter pursues the subject of intimate selves from subjective, intersubjective, and objective levels.
The quotation reprinted above is an example of a typical attempt to define what we need to achieve intimacy. It is perfectly adequate as far as a strategy. This chapter tries to delve a little deeper into the concept of intimacy, bringing in scholarship not only from the social sciences but also the humanities to help us make sense of it. We should keep in mind that intimacy is something that is better lived than described and analyzed. I am the last person who should be writing a chapter on intimacy—but perhaps this makes me just the right person to do so.

**Recognition**

If the intimate self is the core self, it is during intimate moments that we feel most authentically ourselves. Why? Because we are recognized by another as ourselves (and we recognize ourselves). Since we are in a constant negotiation about what this particular self is, another way to put this might be that in the company of intimates, we prefer that performance of our self. It is not just a performance, since we are not pretending to be ourselves. We get to know ourselves better in the company of intimates because they reflect back a self that lets things be—a thought, I hope gets clear during this paper. Fear of intimacy involves a rejection of this dynamic on a number of different levels, but primarily concerns a self for whatever reason in fear—vulnerable, under stress, caught in negative paranoid mind-loops, depressed and looking inward at an unrealized inner core—fighting, flying or both.

If we follow the American philosopher of language and mind, Donald Davidson, we should say that the concept of the self is irreducible and has subjective, intersubjective, and objective layers. Davidson saw each of these layers as autonomous, but interacting (anomalously). As noted, he argued convincingly that the first-person has a certain authority in ascribing mental states to him or herself, but the intersubjective level is where these states begin to make sense (Davidson 1984 and 1987). The intersubjective layer is made up of agents in interaction. It involves a relation between two or more embodied agents (and the world). This is the space of second person address. Objectively speaking, we learn about ourselves partly by standing outside ourselves and observing ourselves. This is not something we do in real-time, but “off-line,” when we sit back and reflect on our actions and speech. Intersubjectivity is the ground of objectivity, but subjectivity is equally as important. Though Davidson does not broach the subject, it may be lack of real engagement with the subjective that leads to self-alienation (see: Kyselo and Di Paolo 2013). We have unique access to our own mental states, our own feelings and emotions, even though we might not have external evidence of these states. These states are real, and they are not necessarily internalizations of something external—as some versions of externalism would argue. These states are recognized in different ways.
In this language, intimacy is a condition of two selves owning their subjective states in dynamic interaction. The core of the word intimacy involves a spatial metaphor of becoming closer within a space, deriving from the Latin word *intus*, meaning “within.” In intimacy what becomes closer in space are these selves, paradoxical selves because they are subjective, intersubjective and objective at the same time. Davidson thought the concept of the self was irreducible for precisely this reason: it neither could be reduced to the subjective self, nor to an intersubjectivity relation, nor to an objectification.

One image that might represent this dynamic of multilayered intimacy is a holograph. Holographs can show two or more images depending what angle they are viewed. So more rightly, we can imagine human interaction as two holographic prints facing one another. The holographs would also have a reflective and refractive surface, one that integrates some perspective of the other. The holographs each have a physical makeup, they are materially embodied, they reflect light differently and may be made of different material, and the material is organized differently. These special holographs have an awareness of their material makeup. When the holographs face one another they move back and forth, sometimes confusingly, between seeing some sort of reflection of themselves in the other and seeing the other. From one perspective the holograph sees itself, from another it sees the other. The holographs in this sense could line up in “healthy” and “unhealthy” states.

Another way to understand intimate interacting selves comes from the field of psychoanalysis, which has at times argued for an interpersonal and dynamic concept of the self within the background of what we could describe as an intersubjective world of emotions. Davidson only addressed this to a limited degree in his musings about Freud, probably influenced by his third wife, philosopher and psychoanalyst Marcia Cavell, known for her groundbreaking book *The Psychoanalytic Mind* (Cavell 1993). Though psychoanalysis is more than a form of talk therapy, it reduces psychological problems to language. It assumes that with enough talk, in principle, we can fight our way through neuroses. However, talk is often not enough.

At least what we have in psychoanalysis would be a serious attempt to articulate the subjective self, a topic many disciplines refuse or fear to tread. In many ways the linguistic layers of psychoanalysis get in the way, rather than facilitate, realization and recognition of subjective states. For some people it may help offer language and words to feelings, but to others this language may get in the way, and the recourse to apply direct phenomenology of bodily existence may be a better way to realize and recognize subjectivity.
According to his small “intellectual autobiography” Davidson began his romance with Cavell at a conference dedicated to his work, at Rutgers (NJ) in April 1984 (Hahn 1999, 60). Davidson was then teaching at Berkeley and Cavell at Purchase, a college in the New York State University system. By June they spent a week together in Venice and by July they were married; what a whirlwind it must have been. Cavell eventually left her position at Purchase to move to Berkeley. It was in these years in the 1980s that Davidson’s work shifts a bit; he begins his attempt to account for subjectivity within his own system, ultimately postulated three distinct and irreducible kinds of knowledge, three particular strange loops, necessary for human thought as we know it: “knowledge of the objective world… knowledge of the minds of others… and knowledge of the contents of my own mind.” The last is what psychoanalysts like Cavell are especially interested.

Davidson has called his philosophical approach “spinozistic,” because he considered himself an ontological monist, while at the same time maintaining conceptual dualism(s) (Hahn 1999, 63). As such, anomalous monism has been used as an antidote to phenomenology that posits naïve forms of dualism or a simplistic relation between knowledge and experience. There are two sides to this. Of course Davidson is a monist in the sense that he does not recognize any ontological distinction between the mind and body, the soul and the body. They are one and the same. But it is also a more thoroughgoing kind of monism that rejects the distinction between self and world. We can’t stand outside ourselves to see the world: we are embedded. He did not advocate the self-certain subject so often criticized as a mirage of modernity by the likes of Foucault. This is a self of misrecognition, a self that cannot feel intimacy because it cannot realize the dynamic between two actively realized subjective selves.

Cavell uses Davidson as a starting point to try to rethink psychoanalysis from a monist position, one that does not bifurcate the soul or self into a rational self and an emotional self. These should be integrated. She argues, among other things, that though emotions differ from beliefs or desires, they are similarly propositional.

Davidson’s musings on psychoanalysis often come in the context of his writings about “Irrationality” – paradoxes, incoherence, Self-deception. The self plays tricks on itself, often precisely because it is intersubjectively entangled. Demons come out, seek to deceive you and others. They do the talking for you. They pull one into ruins and negative feedback loops. Since the intimate self is often a hidden self – conspiracy is often seen as one source of intimacy – these forms of thinking put pressure on Davidson’s monism.
Intimacy

I do not want to mislead you to think that intimacy is easy. It is a precarious thing because not only is it a constant effort to recognize and own the subjective self, intersubjective dynamics add an additional layer of complexity where selves inevitably filter through the intersubjective prism. Intimacy breaks down. But do not confuse negativity necessarily with a loss of intimacy. Intimacy requires a degree of negativity, discord, and pain. Without kindness, as we will see, intimacy can verge on torture, because the rawness of torture also involves a close dynamic of realized subjective selves. Negativity is something that must be moved through for a true intimacy to arise. So intimacy needs a form of kind negativity. After all, demons are fallen angels.

Along these lines, the best book we have on intimacy comes from Ziyad Marar, Global Publishing director of Sage publications (Marar 2012). He argues that intimacy is a subtle emergence. We only feel intimate in brief, fleeting, moments—it is a special thing. He enumerates four features, or what he calls “lenses,” that he thinks characterize intimacy in its clearest cases. They are reciprocity, conspiracy, emotion, and kindness.

All four of these features are useful for my purposes. By reciprocity Marar has in mind something like the notion of intersubjectivity. For Marar, intimacy is a dynamic between two people, no more no less. Group solidarity has similarities to intimacy, but Marar thinks the most authentic form of intimacy is a form of self-discovery that takes place between two people.

By conspiracy, Marar means that true intimacy involves a form of keeping secrets. Intimates know things about one another that others don’t. There is an inside and there is an outside, and those on the inside have privileged knowledge. In the Archaeological Museum in Naples they have the Gabinetto Segreto or secret room, which like the Secretum or secret annex at the British museum, houses all the artifacts deemed obscene by 19th century eyes. In other words, in ancient Pompeii where these artifacts were recovered from, these forms would not have been considered obscene. In this sense intimacy should be considered a Gabinetto Segreto, a secret room.

Marar has a whole chapter on “the kiss.” Of course the kiss is intimate. Apart from sex, it is the closest thing to two selves experiencing the same thing. In my own field of religious studies dual nature of intimate knowledge comes through resolutely in the double meaning or ambiguity of the verb “to know” as in ancient Hebrew, which has both a cognitive and a sexual connotation. The first book of Genesis has an intense meditation on this connection.
Previous to this verse, we have the famous story about Man and Woman’s expulsion from Eden because they ate from the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.” The main issue after they ate, the main knowledge they appear to then have, was they could see one another’s nakedness. What they knew, in other words, was that they were naked. God ends up punishing, Adam, Eve, and the serpent. He makes Adam and Eve some clothes before he kicks them out of Eden. It is right after this point we get the verse “The man knew Hava (Eve) his woman, so she ‘conceived,’” another word with cognitive connotations, at least in English.

Scholars- I think- have had some trouble tying these two meanings, epistemological and sexual, together, but I think we are helped looking at it through this lens of intimacy. Knowledge involves a kind of intimacy about a subject or about a person. Sex is often an incomplete way to intimacy, and of course one can have sex without intimacy. Nevertheless sexual knowledge is often the most direct way to a sense of intimacy, partly because we usually see one another naked. A similar sense of intimacy can come, for example, with a personal physician who may examine our “private parts.” This is someone who has seen your body exposed. Private parts get their name because they are meant to be private.

Along these lines, I would note that there is a deep connection between privacy and intimacy. Intimacy makes a barrier. This is part of the point made by Richard Schickel in his book Intimate Strangers about the intriguing place of celebrity in modern life. Celebrities are paradoxical because we feel like we might know them intimately, but they are in fact strangers. Voyeurism and reality TV are similarly ways to get at a certain form of intimacy without risking anything ourselves (Schickel 1985).

These forms of voyeurism and celebrity lack, among other things, Marar’s third feature of intimacy, a mutual closeness and connection through emotions. Expanding from Marar, we can say that the intersubjective reciprocity of the first feature of intimacy must extend to the domain of emotions. At the same time emotions can only be recognized and owned from the subjective self.

All emotions do not have to be shared, but there has to be a kind of contract in place to accept each self owning its emotions without that expression refracting and reflecting in the other. Somehow pause or slow down the holographic flicker. There has
to be a place for the pure expression of subjective feeling without it being filtered through the prism of intersubjectivity.

Marar’s fourth feature is kindness. As mentioned, without the last one, kindness, he thinks we are left with something like torture. He uses the example of O’Brien in Orwell’s 1984, the torturer of the main character Winston, with whom he had many of the trappings of intimacy without kindness.

These points are admittedly somewhat normative. I do not lay these features out in order to make a normative point, about what indeed “authentic” intimacy is and how we can authentically reach it, but to rather gives us some tools to think about intimacy and the self. I submit that the intimate self is a kind of altered form of the self, or perhaps it is the other way around. The self, realized in intimacy is a healthy self.

Intimacy is not about losing yourself in the other. There is a romantic conception of the relation between two people that perhaps we get from that original dual monad, Adam and Eve. Both versions of the Genesis story lead to the same problem. In the priestly version (Genesis 1) there is no sense that Eve comes from Adam’s bone, but rather Adam and Eve are created in God’s image. God is both male and female at once. In the more poetic version of the story (Genesis 3), Eve comes from the bone of Adam. These two are one “flesh.” We repeat this idea at marriages.

As nice as it is to lose yourself in a kind of codependency with the other, this feeling should not be confused with intimacy. Intimacy in this respect is a lot closer to friendship than to romance. But of course, sex can often lead to intimacy, as can romance.

Romantic attachment involves a certain amnesia or cognitive dissonance. It leaves aside, at least temporarily, the corners and sharp edges of an individual personality. It does not seem to leave room for the other as truly other. It tries to incorporate him or her into the self. Intimacy feels instead like one is appreciated as a distinctive self at the same time that one is authentically (as much as possible) participating in an interaction.

Intimacy feels like a balance between distinction and participation. According to Kyselo’s work we see that the quotation in the epigraph of this text does not emphasize the distinctive self enough. It does not emphasize that intimacy is partly a project of self-realization and ownership.

Davidson’s concept of communication fits well in this respect because it allows for the distinction between subjective, intersubjective, and objective layers. Perhaps the subjective self is the distinctive self. The intersubjective self is the participating self. The third type of level is a kind of online-offline perspective on the interaction itself,
the objective level, the third person. The objective self is perhaps the traditional notion of the self, the main character in the ongoing narrative about our lives, given content by the story we tell about ourselves. There has to be a place for the self, given in memory and narrative, not just the distinct and participating self.

Marar’s book is based on some of the latest research about intimacy, most of which occurs in the context of social psychology. So far, what I can glean is that in the surveys conducted people say that vulnerability and communication are two keys to intimacy. And further, that men and women may have different experience and expectations about intimacy. This is of course a very coarse and general statement. There are also vast similarities. However, it seems clear that natural selection has led to some important sex differentiations given the different roles that men and women play in procreation.

It is a debated subject, but much of the research suggests that women have intimacy as a higher priority (See Laurenceau et al. 1998 and Reis, Clark and Holmes 2004). More precisely it seems women and men have different types of intimacy; we can think of these as two attractors or poles, not necessarily something essential about men and women. In other words there is the “male” mode and the “female” mode. The female mode has intimacy by connecting and working through emotions, talking about them, while men more often describe intimacy (with other men) as doing things together. Culture plays an important role here, but perhaps we can tentatively say that men gravitate to that form of intimacy because the emotional world is more confusing to them as the more autistic sex. Men are often seen as fearful of intimacy as it specifically connects to “responsiveness” – that is men are often perceived as not responsive to the emotional world. Men may fear conflict in emotional world, perceive it as a binary, as a kind of wall, a stop, not something to pass through to the other side. Men fear their emotions, they do not see emotions as a strange loop, but a line. Expectations seem to guide that fear in the sense that men are expected to act in certain ways. Control or the loss of it, more than anything guides the fear. In other words, men set up that wall as a way to control emotions. Passing through them involves a loosening of that control.

**Intimate Triangulation**

Just as Cavell appeared to influence Davidson’s work, Davidson influenced Cavell’s. There were two important ways in which this took place: first, Cavell began to consider the psychoanalytic session as an important case of triangulation and second, she began to consider the role of triangulation in development.

But by way of bringing this chapter to a close, I want to consider how we need to modify the triangle to account for intimacy. Clearly the notion of intersubjectivity is important. Intimacy involves someone sharing perspectives on one’s self; in other
words, part of it includes discovering new things about one’s self. But other factors are not addressed in the theory. For example, as noted, an important factor in intimacy is responsiveness. Responsiveness is a quality of the interaction, it is a judgment or appraisal of the communication partners reaction. This quality has the kind of nuance and granularity not found in Davidson’s original idea. But what about the other aspects of intimacy?

**Perspective and Temporality**

Marar does not touch on two concepts that I think are essential for understanding intimacy. The first is perspective. As I have noted, intimacy differs depending on what perspective—first, second, third (or other?)—one takes on it. On the face of it, this is a statement of the obvious. When looking at an intimate relationship, everything hinges on whether it is I, you, he, she or their pluralized forms that take part in the dynamic.

With this point in mind, we can say that at its most basic level intimacy is about the relationship between YOU and I, the second and first person respectively. Thus the third person, the perspective of science, seem to miss something essential about intimacy. Historical narratives, such as the snapshot in Davidson’s biography I presented in this chapter, can capture the first and second person perspectives by referencing documents written from those perspectives at the proper place and time. Similarly, autobiography and memoir obviously have the potential to capture intimacy because they are in the first person. Most historical narrative, however, is written in the third person. Perhaps this gap between first and second person and the third person conventions of academic conferences is what makes academic conferences often so impersonal and unempathetic.

These perspectives, but especially the relation between YOU and I are not static; they are essentially temporal. They involve an active engagement with memories about one’s self and about the intimate interaction over time. The actors taking part in an intimate connection often approach the interaction at different speeds and reflect on the interaction, through various media, from different temporal perspectives; thus the dynamics of the interaction is some kind of compromise or balance of these speeds when easy, and temporal dissonance when strained. The third person, unlike the first and second, has the broadest perspective on temporality. This is possible by virtue of its narrative constitution. The third person perspective allows for a certain type of memorializing that can make or break intimacy.

**Narrative Interude:**

*Billy’s wife said she wanted him to have an extra-marital fling before she did, even though it was her idea to have an open marriage. He didn’t realize how funny this was*
until he talked to Mary about it. He met her in Amsterdam yesterday. She is coming to meet him now at a café. What a lovely comfy place this is, he thought. He immediately broached the subject of some weird, overly enthusiastic emails he sent her in the past month. Billy was bored, a bit paranoid, falling into old habits, they die hard. He really believed that story. He was looking through some old journals from college on his computer on the way to Amsterdam on the plane. He fell for some girls a bit too easily, started acting weird, especially when they started pulling away. Mary mentioned a guy who started to get too clingy to her, though Billy forgot most of the story by now, but she (and all) women don’t find that at all attractive. At least not when it comes out of nowhere for no reason. Billy thinks some guys are actually programmed to rush things in that department. Women are the more selective sex.

Billy came to Amsterdam to work on this paper with her. He was also there because they seem to have a nice connection, and he is attracted to her. . . Billy wasn’t sure what Mary wanted with him, but he knows he went too far with the romantic implications of their relationship a while back. She is not that interested in romance. She says she does not want to get caught in a symbiotic relationship. She is dating men like crazy. She says it’s a way for her to feel like she is alive.

Mary and Billy met at an academic conference that his friend Josh, whom he met a year or two ago, organized. Billy gave a paper. Now he can sort of see that there was nothing unique or special about her coming on to him. This type of thing often happens at conferences. It was no big deal. Billy took it as one because he had been married for 7 years, and was such a sincere, nice guy.

When she arrived she immediately told him she had come to the decision that she was not going to have sex with him this weekend. Billy got the impression they would just have to see how it goes. Things are a bit hazy for Billy today, a day after, because after that point they had such a wonderful day together. He actually felt better after she said that because it took some pressure off him. He wasn’t all that aware of the pressure he felt from his wife to have an extramarital fling (so she can).

They worked for a few hours on their paper topic. They are trying to write a paper together. This was the first time they actually tried to come up with something. Mary is brilliant, has a beautiful mind. So it was really nice to get going on the paper.

By the end of the night they were, after going to a few bars, having Sushi (…)

Billy noticed she brought up the subject of kissing a few times, and it was obvious he needed to kiss her at some point. The only question was when. It was a hard task for him because he hadn’t kissed anyone aside from his wife for eleven years. They were at a bar here in Amsterdam called Minsk, a kind of Russian inspired theme, they were able to make his current favorite drink. Mary was drinking Mojitos.
Billy remembers saying something like, “I think I am supposed to kiss you.” And she said something like “academics are always overthinking things – you need to act instead of think” – well, he didn’t need to hear that twice. Billy remembers that a few seconds later he did act. He kissed her. Wow, was it nice to melt into her lips. To open the eyes and be able to stare into her beautiful green-brown beams, some kind of very earthy feeling, something so lovely. When the kissing got a little heavy, she would let out the most astonishingly lovely phrases, in her cute French accent, “Oh my God” she said a couple times. That was so cute.

So you get a sense now, I guess, of how the night went. They talked the whole time. Now he has a room at the Hilton. He is waiting for her to come over and they are going to do the same sort of thing again.

They spent the night together, but they didn’t have sex. They were so close and they both wanted to, something stood in the way. Something went wrong by the end. . . She was working for a very long time, and they both realize afterwards that it was the first time they were really disconnected. How ironic that this thing they both really want would actually disconnect them and push them apart.

There was pain the day after. They spent the morning being together in bed, they couldn’t get enough. Not having sex was a bit painful, but the pain was worth it. Saying goodbye was quick and chaotic. Billy jumped in a cab outside the hotel so he wouldn’t be late for his plane. She was leaving later in the day for a conference where she was a keynote speaker. Billy just wanted to sit in silence, in the chaos, excitement and mystery of the wonderful connection they had made in those days. But the cab driver was an old guy who insisted on talking. Strangely and immediately Billy felt a sense of communion with this guy. Somehow Mary was in him. Billy could find her through him.

There was a sadness and frustration about the limits that his present life put on him (...) Guilt in that feeling of ambivalence. Of course he wanted to see his kids, but he wanted to stay with Mary more.

Adam, Eve and the Serpent:
The state I’m in is an altered state. I’m not the same self that I was when I started. The motions are dangerous, but at the same time I feel a sense of freedom. Monogamy and marriage traps selves in a certain type of relationship. The feelings I have, involve a kind of pull, we both have described it as a certain kind of pull that feels itself centered in the rib cage. Whatever the physiology of this feeling is, it is the likely source for seeing emotions centered in the heart, in the bodily center of the rib cage.

So the loop we’re in is an emotional-cognitive one. It is dynamic and changing. It is intersubjective and embodied. I’m trying to figure out where the self fits in there. I’ve been saying that the intimate self is a kind of altered self. It is not the self of
everyday interaction. The intimate self is a vulnerable self, perhaps. It is a self, taking part in an interaction. People are closed off from intimacy for this reason. It takes a certain degree of risk to put oneself out there. But it’s not the same as romantic attachment. It is not about losing oneself in the other. To the extent that we want to be dependent on the other, this seems to stand in the way of intimacy. There should be space for the other to be a distinctive self (Kyselo fc.).

Intimacy emerges out of a balance of interaction, so not all pairings have the potential for intimacy. These are part of the constraints and limitations placed on intimacy. Selves seem to need intimacy. Emotional and physical intimacy put together almost always veers toward romantic codependency. This is a biological attractor with deep roots in our evolution as a species. In some ways we could think that romantic codependency was a clarified form of intimacy. Some of the same elements are there.

The etymological roots of the Hebrew word for heart, Lev/Levav may go back to the idea of motion. In this sense it is tied directly to our word emotion. But what is the motion? I’m trying to capture for you that self in motion, not a static notion of the self. Certain motions are healthy- certain are unhealthy. The dynamics of intimacy is a certain type of healthy motion.

Two selves are structured much more in relation to the other, a type of codependency. It doesn’t have to be that way, but it usually is. Males and female are attractors to different approaches to intimacy. In the poetic version of the Genesis story previously noted, after Yahweh Elohim forms Adam, he makes a garden, and plants two trees (among others) there, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He says Adam can eat from any tree except the latter; if he does eat from that tree, he will definitely die.

Adam is lonely, and the animals in the garden don’t make him feel any better, so Yahweh Elohim makes him a “helper” (ʾezer k- negdo - literally a helper fit or in front of him). Eve is created (or “built” - baña) from Adam’s rib or bone (šēlā). While Adam (Man) is made from dust, Eve (Woman) is made from Adam. Adam is “formed” (yašar), while woman is “built”. Then Adam riffs in verse about Eve being part of his flesh and bone and being made from him and for him. The narrator then explains that this is why a man leaves his parents and “cleaves” (dābaq) to his woman (or wife or Eve).

The pair was naked (ʿārōm) in the garden but they were not ashamed. The next section begins with a play on this word for naked. It points to the snake or serpent, who- it says- was more “crafty” (ʿārūm, crafty or wise when used positively) than all the other beasts. The word for snake, incidentally, is close to homophonous with
the word for magic (nāḥāṣ). Is the author pointing to some connection between these concepts, between wisdom and nakedness (and magic)?

The serpent convinces the Woman to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and subsequently their “eyes are opened,” the pair realize that they are naked and they cover themselves. Yahweh Elohim finds out about this when Adam lets it slip that they know they are naked. And in perhaps the greatest example ever of throwing someone under the bus, Adam blames Woman, who in turn blames the serpent. Yahweh Elohim curses all three and kicks the human pair out of the garden, after making (ʾāša) them some clothes. The reason given for kicking them out is that Yahweh Elohim thinks Adam/Man (this part of the verse ignores the woman) is becoming too much like “one of us” (k‘ahad mimmennu), too much like a superhuman agent, and wants to avoid that he eats from the tree of life and thereby live forever. Upon leaving the garden the pair immediately start making babies and the genealogy of humanity begins in earnest.

While Adam is made from dust from the earth, Eve is made from Adam’s rib, from his chest cavity, from the bone of his bones. This is all from the patriarchal biblical perspective: The idea that Woman was put on this earth to keep Man from being lonely, that Woman is part of Man; some form of ownership. She was basically a piece of him, literally taken out of him–his inner core, his substance.

I’ve been trying to capture the subjective component of intimate selves. This is as risky as any intimate encounter. This is anecdotal, narcissistic, but it makes me wonder why was Yahweh Elohim so upset with Adam and Eve?

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**Endnotes**

1 In this context more should be said about “dirty talk,” the role of sexually explicit language in intimacy, but I will have to leave that to another time.

2 I borrow these terms from Kyselo; see Kyselo and Tschacher 2014
References