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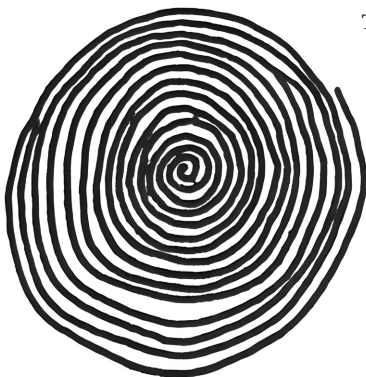
Spiraling Thoughts?

If you have managed to read this far in our volume, then you have been invited to dive into various areas of research, encounter all kinds of different thoughts, and follow a variety of arguments. You probably had to put the book down every now and then to regain your own thoughts and concentration. The rigors of academic work leave little room for relaxation. As this book has been conceived of as an alternative handbook presenting innovative, interdisciplinary approaches, I would like to invite you to create some space to disentangle your spiraling thoughts with the suggestion of an exercise from Lynda Barry's *Syllabus* (2014, 76–78), which – paradoxically enough – uses hand-drawn spirals as a means of disentanglement.

The setup is as simple as can be: take a pen and paper, and start by drawing a dot in the middle, from which you should then – as slowly as possible – draw a spiraling line moving outward – without lifting your hand. Try to keep the lines as close together as possible without them ever touching (76).

In academic writing or intellectual reflection, our thoughts often resemble tightly wound spirals that twist and turn around themselves in complex ways, sometimes without any predictable or satisfying end. However, as we begin to draw larger and larger spirals on the paper, watching more and more lines twist and turn, we enter a state of both calm and concentration (76).

What's more, this exercise is not only suitable for (re-)finding concentration or for organizing one's own thoughts, but by concentrating on the line, also fits in aesthetically and substantively with the articles by Irmela Marei Krüger-Fürhoff and Naomi Lobnig in this section on "age." Both point to the constitutive and symbolic potential of lines in their analyses of comics dealing with aging bodies:



The *tangles* [...] link medical and familial perspectives, as they refer to neurofibrillary bundles in the brain typical of Alzheimer's, i.e., pathologically tangled fragments of a certain protein [...]. (Krüger-Fürhoff 2025 [trans. K.S.])

The bodies portrayed are frail, wrinkled, hairy, toothless, bloated, or emaciated, have bags under their eyes and sunken cheeks. [...] [They] are not only vulnerable, but also seem to be in motion all the time, enhanced by the undulating lines of the limbs and clothing. (Lobnig 2025 [trans. K.S.])

In her exercise, after some warm-up spiraling, Barry invites you to start shifting your focus from the spiral to your own body:

While you work on your spiral →→→→ put all of your attention on the tip-top of your head... Then move it to the center of your forehead... Then the bridge of your nose, your nostrils, your upper lip, your jaw... Then the back of your skull, the nape of your neck, your throat... Then your shoulders, collar bone, sternum, shoulder blades, ribcage... All the way down your spine to the base of your spine. Hold it there... Now your belly, your hips, your thighs, knees, backs of your knees... Your shins, calves, ankles, feet, the soles of your feet, your toes... Now your upper arms, forearms, your wrists, your palms, your fingers... (Barry 2014, 77)



Her exercise thus connects the abstract figure on the paper to a concrete physicality and underlines drawing (and thinking) as an embodied practice. So, what are you waiting for? Start spiraling to unwind!

Bibliography

Barry, Lynda. *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor*. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2014.

