

<http://somatosphere.net/2010/07/smile-or-die-barbara-ehrenreich-on.html>

Smile or Die: Barbara Ehrenreich on positive thinking (the cartoon version)

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By Eugene Raikhel

At Savage Minds Matt has linked to an excellent animated version of a talk by [David Harvey on the recent global economic crisis](#). The animation is one of a series put together by [the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce \(RSA\)](#), all of them based on longer lectures given at the Society. Aside from the content — many of the talks are very good — the animations represent a very interesting way of communicating relatively complex ideas in a visual mode. They're a bit like animated versions of the old "Introducing..." series ([Introducing Marx](#), [Introducing Freud](#), etc).

A number of these talks address issues we deal with regularly here at Somatosphere, including a talk by Philip Zimbardo (of Stanford prison experiment fame) on "[The Secret Powers of Time](#)" and Matthew Taylor on the ways that [policy debates are increasingly drawing upon psychology and neuroscience research](#).

Perhaps the most interesting one is [Barbara Ehrenreich](#)'s critique of positive psychology — "[Smile or Die](#)." The animation is based on this more extended talk, also viewable as a [video on the RSA website](#), and draws on her recent book, [Bright Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking has Undermined America](#). The argument (essentially that "positive thinking" as promoted in the US amounts to an ideology of social control) certainly isn't strikingly original, but it is important and the animation alone makes watching it worthwhile.

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