Geography of Hope
Exile, the Enlightenment, Disassimilation

PIERRE BIRNBAUM
Resumo de Geography of Hope: Exile, the Enlightenment, Disassimilation

Intellectuals of Jewish origin have long been well represented in the social sciences, although very few of the most prominent among them have devoted any of their work to the fact of being Jewish itself.

At the same time, the founding role of Jewish theoreticians has been thought to derive from their dual position as both outsiders faced with the possibility of anti-Semitism and insiders assimilated into behaving according to the norms of a dominant "code of civility." In "Geography of Hope," Pierre Birnbaum studies the trajectories of eight celebrated Jewish thinkers of the past two centuries (Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Aron, Arendt, Berlin, Walzer, and Yerushalmi) who emerged from milieus acculturated to greatly varying degrees.

The result is a renewed historiography of the Diaspora traversed by the tensions between adherence to Enlightenment universalism and a return to individual origins. Birnbaum's analysis of writings often neglected by previous scholarship, such as private correspondence, testifies to the multiplicity of possible responses to this challenge of double allegiance from the more republican turn of the French to those Americans touched by the culture of identity.

This vast and encompassing work is a stimulating, provocative, and hopeful contribution to the study of Judaism and democracy. "

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