
Isaiah Berlin, the Magus of Oxford, the octogenarian historian of ideas, has devoted a small book to reviving him.

At the very moment Diderot and his fellow Encyclopedists in Paris were erecting their edifice of rational knowledge, in Königsberg Hamann was advocating the idiosyncratic over the systematic, the bizarre over the daily, and the scarcely believable over the commonly accepted. And it is exactly this contrariness that interests Berlin. Hamann was the first European thinker to formulate a rebuttal of the Enlightenment that was not grounded on strictly religious premises. His fundamental insight was that the supposed universality of Enlightenment rationality tends not only to deny religious faith but to negate the validity of what all individuals uniquely see, hear, and feel for themselves. Consequently, Hamann opposed science, and even common sense, even when they produced useful results, fearing their suffocating effect upon the individual's autonomy.

At times Hamann comes off sounding like an early D. H. Lawrence, offering the same heady cocktail of antiscience, romanticism, and individualism. However, readers of this small volume will likely find Hamann's intelligence less intriguing than Berlin's. Berlin's complexity of mind, neither strictly Enlightenment nor "Counter-Enlightenment" (a word he coined), enables him to hold contradictory ideas simultaneously. He thinks that Hamann's irrationalist spiritual vision (so unlike Berlin's skepticism) does possess "intrinsic value," even though Hamann carried it into a fanaticism that imperils social and political life. Hamann's brand of fanaticism—a dangerous mixture of anti-intellectualism, anti-Semitism, fideism, and populism—would grow over the next two centuries "until it finally reach[ed] a point of violent hysteria in Austro-German racism and National Socialism." Yet it is for his positive as well as his negative qualities that "Hamann repays study," Berlin concludes. "He struck the first blow against the quantified world; his attack was often ill-judged, but he raised some of the greatest issues of our time by refusing to accept their advent."

Contemporary Affairs

BLACKS AND JEWS: ALLIANCES AND ARGUMENTS. Ed. by Paul Berman.

Delacorte Press. 303 pp. \$22.50

JEWS AND BLACKS: Let the Healing Begin. By Cornel West and Michael Lerner. Grosset/Putnam. 226 pp. \$24.95

Of all "emigrant groups" in America, blacks and Jews have come closest to sharing a common sociological experience: both historically were victims of persecutions, and both minorities were long regarded as outcasts by the dominant culture. For much of this century American Jews and blacks co-operated in an unofficial alliance, one that began with the supporting links between W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Crisis* and Abraham Cahan's *Jewish Daily Forward* and continued through the close friendship of those moral prophets, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr. Why, then, since the late 1960s, did black-Jewish relations go so bad?



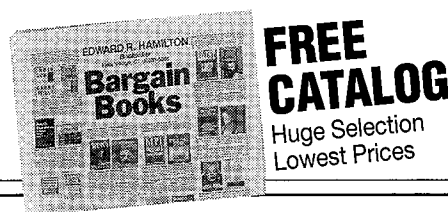
Paul Berman's anthology helps answer that question. Its essays show how the black-Jewish consensus of the civil rights era (perhaps romanticized even then) broke down amid acrimony over affirmative action, black nationalism, and the fear of crime. Black and Jewish intellectuals in the 1960s began to articulate diverging visions. Set forth here are the classically inflammatory essays—Norman Podhoretz's "My Negro Problem—and Ours" (1963), James Baldwin's "Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White" (1967), and Cynthia Ozick's "Literary Blacks and Jews" (1972)—that give a startling sense of how many steps it took to reach the current state of perplexed resentment and hostility. Baldwin, for instance, concluded his essay conciliatorily: "If one blames the Jew for not having been ennobled by oppression, one is not indicting the single figure of the Jew but the entire human race, and one is also making a quite breathtaking claim for oneself. I know that my oppression did not ennoble me. . . ." This tone did not last. More depressing than their essays themselves are the 1993 afterwards appended by Podhoretz and Ozick, in which they come across as dramatically more one-sided and unforgiving than when they wrote the essays.

In *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin*, Cornel West, a professor of African-American studies at Harvard University, and Michael Lerner, the editor of *Tikkun*, parlay their friendship into a dialogue about prejudice, American culture, and their perceptions of each other's histories. They begin with personal experiences. West grew up tough and unruly, beating up white students for lunch money. Lerner was just the kind of brainy white kid who got beat up. At one point Lerner entertains a paranoid fantasy about black anti-Semitism massively, brutally out of control. Ultimately, though, Lerner offers a liberal, if peculiar, reason for why Jews must shun antiblack sentiments. "If Jews can turn their backs on the suffering of

blacks," he writes, "they would be embracing a worldview that is indistinguishable from the rest of American life—so in that case, why bother to stay Jewish, with all the attendant hassles, risks, and separations from others?"

ART LESSONS: Learning from the Rise and Fall of Public Arts Funding. *By Alice Goldfarb Marquis. Basic. 304 pp. \$25*

Thirty years after its founding in 1965, the debates over the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) have settled into a familiar pattern. Conservatives condemn NEA-funded projects as alternately too elitist or too compromised by popular culture. They object most strenuously when taxpayers' money is



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