

KINGSTON, KANT AND COMMON SENSE¹

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During the enlightenment the idea of a common sense that bound all people together was something frequently appealed to in European political and anthropological thought. This paper is about the role that common sense plays in modern anthropology and modern life, taking Immanuel Kant's description and my own experience of Jamaican social life as examples. Kant used the idea of common sense as a way of centring his philosophical and 'anthropological' understanding of society as it was emerging in the 1780s and 90s. This paper is about the anthropological theory that Kant derived from common sense and about the profound effect that the philosophical turnaround of the late eighteenth century had (and still has) on Jamaican sociability. The three questions I will be dealing with are 1. What is the purpose of common sense in Kant's framework? 2. What does Jamaican life tell us about it? and 3. What value, if any, can a notion of common sense be to current anthropological thinking? I will not be dealing very closely here with my own fieldwork. But I thought that I might begin by illustrating some of the questions implied in this paper by way of a small episode.

A few months before he died, my landlady's husband Vernal had decided to be baptised into a church some way from where we lived, down Mountainview Road. On the day of the funeral, several bus loads of people, including myself, were packed into the small church hall listening to the pastor beginning his eulogy. This pastor was a tall charismatic man. Most of the people here were not his normal congregation but, as he strode up and down the front of the church, berating the Sunday believers, the individuals with bachelor's degrees who thought themselves too clever to believe in hell, and the ones who had just come here to wear their pretty clothes, he soon had the conscience of his mixed flock, roused to a crescendo of alleluias. One point in the service impressed me particularly: the pastor began talking about Kingston's bus drivers; how dirty they were, how the conductors packed the passengers like sardines in a tin, and then drove the buses like mad people.

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These comments aroused shouts of approval from the congregation. The pastor could hardly have picked upon a more appropriate object of common dislike. Since the removal of state regulation in the 1980s, Kingston's buses – the only means by which most people could ride around the city – had become almost insufferable. A bus-fare increase is the one thing most likely to start a riot in the town.

The pastor continued in this vein for a few moments. Then, his line of argument suddenly changed. What if the bus driver was the only one taken up to heaven, when the day of Judgement came? What if on that day the driverless bus and all the people in it were left careering through the streets of Kingston destined for one final and almighty crash?

Perhaps it was because the bus in which I travelled back from the service in failed to career anywhere, but instead broke down with water in the fuel supply, that this episode stuck in my mind. Nevertheless, what intrigued me was the way the pastor was able to bring together for a group of people from very varied backgrounds, the sense of impending judgement and salvation out of the common sense experience of travelling on one of Kingston's none-too-safe buses.

Before I go on I need to make some more general comments on the situation in contemporary Kingston. The city itself is a burgeoning social aggregation of about 750,000 people, with a constant inflow of rural migrants into its most impoverished ghettos – Riverton City, Standpipe, and Allman Town and so on. Occupations for the vast majority of these people belong either to the secondary sector or the informal economy – jobs like tobacco processing, rum, higgling (small scale vending) and domestic work. There are almost no primary sector – that is to say, stable remunerative industrial – jobs to be had. Hence, Kingston, and Jamaica as a whole, can best be described as a remittance economy, both in terms of the State's dependence on the World Bank and international aid agencies, and also in terms of the dependency of most families in Jamaica on the money sent home by relatives abroad.

Within the working class sector (over 80% of people on the island) there are considerable differences in personal biography and wealth. As an example, the landlady of the tenement yard in which I lived during fieldwork had left school at twelve, worked as a part-time seamstress, run a small bar, emigrated to England on a banana-boat during the 1960s, and then to America, built up a tenement yard of about ten dwellings, and managed to make homes for various members of her extended family including a large number of adopted children. When I met her aged 55, she was living half the year in New York, where she worked for a domestic agency, and half the year on the island. By way of contrast, my good friend and close associate during fieldwork, Lee,

was a journeyman housepainter who had lived on a number of parts of Jamaica in his life doing odd jobs and finally settled down near his cobbler brother in the neighbourhood where I was living. Lee still depended for his income on his ability to juggle a number of small construction jobs in central Kingston by way of a broad net of relationships with friends, acquaintances, and family scattered around the city.

Politically, Kingston is cross-cut by a broad-based popular allegiances in a two party system. These have turned various areas of the city into mutually opposed 'zones', or 'garrison-communities'. Since independence, two-party democracy has increasingly taken the form of a machine politics whose workings have been fatally enhanced by the introduction of various "means of destruction" – to use Goody's phrase (1974) – and by the retraction of legitimate state intervention into the economy and society in accordance with IMF and World Bank liberalisation stipulations. All these factors add up to Kingston's well renowned standing as one of the world's most 'Hobbesian' social contexts with some of the highest levels of per capita violence on the earth.

In these circumstances fieldwork, by what might be termed formal methods, is difficult. My own research, which began as a study of Jamaican artists, proceeded by way of following the lives and daily experience of a fairly loosely organised group of principally male friends through their various interventions, economic and recreational into a more or less unpredictable urban milieu, most importantly perhaps in their visits to one particularly integral aesthetic ritual institution, the wake.

There are some benefits to this kind of participant observation weighted towards co-experience, and they derive in large part from the fact that the point of entry into society both for the anthropologist and the people he associates with is the same. Likewise, the enquiry has to begin with the capabilities individuals display in dealing with an unbounded social context rather than with an assumed social homogeneity against which individuals are then explained. I mention this method, which might best be described as making a virtue out of a necessity, because it was this that gave rise to my first interest in common sense as a mode of individual adaptation and especially to Kant's delineation of it as I shall explain. I should say that when I talk about 'the Jamaicans' I am talking of a general picture derived from the method described above. The means available in anthropological intervention, both practical and ethical, frequently remind us how much anthropological interpretation is a relative and imaginative science. What Kant has to say about common sense can suggest how this need not necessarily be a disadvantage.

Common Sense

The particular idea that I want to centre on here is Kant's use of the term 'common sense', as it appears in the *Critique of Judgement* and in various other of his political, anthropological and theological writings. What I argue is that Kant's conception of common sense can tell us a great deal about contemporary Jamaican expressive life, and that perhaps the two combined can tell us something important about the experience of modernity.

Here I have taken a leaf from Gudeman and Rivera, whose *Conversations in Colombia* (1990), in various interesting ways, treats Colombian peasant society as a kind of replacement or historical stand-in for the interlocutors now absent from the picture of political economy provided by Aristotle, Locke, Marx and other theorists of property and production. However, my aim is slightly different: to tease out from one philosophical idea a series of broader themes, and to forge some links with the particular historical experience of a people, the Jamaicans, very different from Gudeman's Colombian peasant conversationalists.

Kant's use of common sense as a category comes up in the middle of the *Critique of Judgement* (1952, first published in 1790), where he describes it as synonymous with aesthetic judgement. He argues that common sense as such is not empiricism and is not logic. It is a subjective feeling that appeals to universality and hence is better described as a "sensus communis aestheticus" than as a "sensus communis logicus". In order to understand what I think that means, and the aim behind it, it is necessary to sketch in some wider strands of the argument in this critique.

The Critique is divided into a long section about the feeling of pleasure or displeasure that we take in certain experiences, and the judgements we make in connection with these experiences – ie, aesthetic judgement – and then a shorter section concerning the application of teleology to the sciences – that is to say, teleological judgement. At first sight, the two parts seem to be entirely different. The theme of the first is that aesthetic judgement is an intuitive category of knowledge which is anomalous in relation to other kinds of knowledge because it cannot be validated objectively, and yet it lays claim to universality. For instance, if two girls are standing on the street side debating the merits of Papa-San's latest song and one says that "it beautiful everlasting" and the other says that "it never sweet her at all" then both are stating something that will never be justifiable either by reference to the logic of propositions or to the verifiability of facts and yet their respective claims are no less legitimate for that. Aesthetics is never abstractable to considerations of utility.

Instead individual aesthetic judgement appeals to something greater and more universal, and Kant calls this a 'super-sensuous' faculty: the faculty for finding a momentary sense of delight or disgust or awe in a changing world, and the expectation that other people will do so too. He relates this to our capacity for grasping a sense of the final in the diversity and open-endedness of our experience. As he explains, what at the level of immediate experience can be seen as free play, at the historical and social level appears as culture and society. But the critique of judgement is primarily concerned with the workings of our imagination in so far as our imaginative sense strives for shared validity. Common sense is common because the things it responds to that make for sadness, humorousness and so on share implicit rules. A whole branch of enquiry developed out of these investigations. For instance Bergson's study *Laughter* (1911) is a major extrapolation of a brief section in the critique on what it is that makes things funny in everyday life.

We often tend to see common sense as an amorphous and sluggishly moving body of 'folk knowledge'. For example, the very different theoretical work of Geertz (1983) and Gramsci (1971) on the subject is underscored by this theme. Kant, however, saw it as a faculty – and without preempting my argument in the later part of this paper I should say that this is also the way in which Jamaicans see it – someone either 'have sense' or they are 'a nonsense somebody'.

The 'Critique of Teleological Judgement' is partly couched as a refutation of the speculative theologians who sought to prove the material influence of a designing god on the world, and partly as a demonstration of the usefulness of the concept of 'final purposes', that is, teleology, as an addition to mechanistic empiricism. Teleology, the judgement of phenomena by reference to their end purpose, has almost disappeared from the social sciences as a self-sustaining principle. For Kant and the later idealists it was integral to their way of thinking. By way of example Kant includes an exposition of how teleology can be brought to bear on the change and adaptation of plant and animal life towards more successful forms. It is often forgotten how proto-evolutionary and historically framed Kant's thinking is – we see this earlier on in the critique, in his analysis of the historical conflict between the makers of cultural artifacts and the consumers of them.

Used in a more appropriate and schematic way than in the 'methods' of the theologians, the notion of final purpose could be a necessary addition, both to science, and to other forms of reason, most importantly, reasoning about moral behaviour. In his view, without a teleology of final purposes, life according to moral principles is without meaning. In this way if empiricism tells about what is, teleology is a way of centring the relativity of our knowledge by the employment of judgement aligned to a notion of overarching purpose.

So, the Critique can be seen in another way, as an attempt to match the purposes of common understanding with the goals of science. Why does Kant want to debunk the speculative theologians, but at the same time, abstract and elevate a version of common experience to the level of a scientific principle? Why is common sense necessarily teleological in character? And, why is this category of knowledge called 'judgement'?

The answer to these questions, from my point of view, is where the link with Jamaican contemporary life comes in. I will argue that, what is absent from the picture we have of Kant, is present in Jamaican contemporary expression: a complex historical context in which common sense was under trial by way of the immense and often violent social change of which it is part.

It is well worth remembering in this context, that in 1776 Thomas Paine had published his own work on 'common sense' – a pamphlet which used scriptural argument to deny the legitimacy of rule by kingship and demand American independence. In a different way we can see Kant's contribution as equally radical – taking religion away from the theologians and the absolutist state, and reformulating it as the communal apprehension of ordinary people mediated by the momentary encounter with the beautiful, the tragic, the humorous and so on.

Out of aesthetic experience and the symbolic world it engenders, Kant provides perhaps the first truly modern account of the bases of social experience. But noticeably his theory is not primarily concerned with the relation of signs and symbols to each other but, rather, with our emotional or sensory engagement with them and the feeling for a shared social world that this supplies. It strikes me that if we are interested in finding out something about the 'why' of people's attachment to social categories, then we may need to return to some of the kinds of enquiries that Kant makes into the individuality and difference of imaginative experience as it becomes engaged in a dialogue with a sense of communal teleology – a kind of investigation that has, to a degree, been pushed into the background of anthropological practice.

With this in mind, the discussion of common sense falls logically within the framework of a number of other late writings on anthropology and religion – notably his essay on *Perpetual Peace* (1988b). This discussion is the culmination of a series of political essays in which Kant emphasises the principle of cosmopolitan right (1988a): the right of everyone to be a citizen of the world beyond their citizenship of any particular state. *Perpetual Peace* is an attack on colonialist warfare and on the means by which the stronger world-powers attempted to justify slavery and the expropriation of lands regarded as "belonging to no-one because their inhabitants were counted for nothing". These were the actions "of powers who, while imbibing injustice like water, make much

of their piety, and who in matters of orthodoxy, want to be regarded as the elect”.

Kant’s anthropology and politics are both the product of a viewpoint from the periphery of economic and political centres of power. In his *Anthropology* (1974) Kant has quite a few rude things to say about the assumed orthodoxy that the English world-view implies. Hence the relativism inherent in his common-sense represents the position of a thinker on the margins of a cultural and political orthodoxy.

For brevity’s sake, I have to make a quick intersection here, and return to my main theme. With its intuitively grasped teleological frame, the positive element in the common sense of ordinary people has a close symbolic affinity with the teleological aim of a peaceful cosmopolitan community. Certainly Kant is not being crudely optimistic when he says this, but determinedly idealistic. As he argues, peaceful cosmopolitanism is not something that will happen of necessity, but it is a goal precisely because it is morally right, and because social existence makes no logical sense without it.

But, the relationship between Kant’s moral doctrine, and the teleology contained in common sense is still obscure, for lack of concrete examples. Kant’s essay on *The End of All Things* (1988c) can provide us with a key. This is a work that deals with the place of the notion of final purpose in popular theological experience. Kant begins with a quote from St John – “Then the angel... raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever... ‘That Henceforth Time Shall No Longer Be’.”

He argues that all reasoning peoples have the super-sensuous faculty for apprehending the (paradoxical and mysterious) final purpose of things and orientating it to the particular facts of their own lives. Here I should say that it is no accident that the third Critique is called the Critique of Judgement – Judgement both in the everyday and in the Biblical sense. Religion as he makes clear in various works, has meaning only when viewed in relation to the idea of a community directed by a sense of Final Aim.² Presciently, Kant saw the way in which our notion of ‘community’ could be something imaginative – a faculty developed by each person in relation to the facts of their own lives – but could simultaneously have very real effects in history. Religion, because of its

² Blake gives some sense of this enlightenment synthesis of science and religion:

The atoms of Democritus
And Newton’s particles of light
Are sands upon the Red sea shore
Where Israel’s tents do shine so bright

universalising intentions was always one of the most common causes of war. It is certainly true in this regard that Kant's 'public sense' does have a millenarian urgency to it – a tone which I think reflects the times in which he was living. Gellner, amongst others, has shown how Kant's philosophy represents the sociology of modern society *par excellence* (1985: 4). But as I shall argue later on, the Kant that we now recognise as a modernist is perhaps only one half of the enlightenment thinker. Like Paine, Kant puts the archetypical image of feudal society; biblical Judgement, to an entirely modern purpose – to act as a symbol of common experience in the face of entropic individualisation.

For Kant, then, common sense is, in one way, the practical side of religious consensus. Though by no means all common sense expression or aesthetic feeling makes any direct religious reference, its role is to mediate the diversity of experience with the necessary sense of a final purpose inherent in things. Kant's common sense is practically religious. It centres in the variety of personal encounters with the world and with others – it is a faculty that is experiential and revelatory. At an abstract level, what interests him is that our communal or public sense – the part of our experience that we derive from being part of a community, need not be grounded in static relations between ourselves and others in a given place and time but may be the relative product of our own changing understanding of the world.

For me, perhaps the most difficult thing to understand here, is this supposedly religious form or content of common sense. Since Kant's time, much of the English speaking world has undergone the death of the religious sense and its replacement by other orthodox notions of final purpose such as the idea of a force driving the market and so on. Equally artistic and imaginative experience has in many regards severed its links with aesthetics in the Kantian meaning of the term. If anything, the kinds of expression Kant described and attempted to codify have been retained only outside the Northern European culture that was his original source of induction.

This is where, looking at the way Jamaicans talk – their rhetoric, story-telling and so on – can be interesting. Because in ordinary Jamaican expression, this religious element of ordinary sense in the way Kant describes it is clearly present. Ordinary Jamaicans combine the slightly anomalous situation of being deeply religious, and extremely individualistic at the same time. I would say that there is a different religious denomination for roughly every fifty practising worshippers. But what is more interesting in a way is the sense in which this thinking about final purposes permeates everyday interaction. On a typically packed Kingston robot-bus, or a walk through the streets down-town, you can see religious meetings suddenly emerging out of a collection of a few people with choral accompaniment, or somebody will sell you a

pamphlet which relates life in Jamaica to the wider world and to (often highly personal and gnostic) interpretations of the Bible. This kind of moral feeling is absolutely spontaneous and omnipresent in the urban milieu, and is invariable linked to the conditions and experience of ordinary people in the city. Rasta millenarianism is a well-known example, but it is only one. I want to focus on another example based on my own original project in Jamaica.

Below I have included part of a taped interview with a well-known naivist painter called Leonard Daley. I had gone up into the hills of Bog-Walk to see if I could buy one of his canvases for the Ethnographic Museum in Cambridge. Other than being a quite striking example of a typical kind of Jamaican folk-rhetoric, what is most significant from the immediate point of view is how Daley continuously weaves his own autobiographical experience into a sense of greater purpose by various imaginative dialectical devices. It would be nice, were there more space here, to go into where this kind of personal didactic story fits into the typical moments of Jamaican interaction: the bar, the street-corner and so on. Suffice it to say that Daley's speech belongs to a well-accepted genre of story-telling and that any Jamaican would recognise it. The other person here is Lee, the Jamaican house-painter and good friend of mine referred to earlier:

"...Now the person who hate evil respectively; could that person be good? – question ask – one who hate evil, or hate – yes, hate – or hate even to do evil, can that person be collective respectively? It's impossible (*louder*) **it's impossible for a person hate evil and is not a fool** (*laughter*). Could you taught me of good without evil was existing? (*pause*) 'there is not evil'; wha' you would a teach me then?; 'there is no good'; wha' you goin' teach me? ah!'

Huey; 'the two go together?'

L.D.; (*very quietly*) 'Oh lord!, (*then raises voice*) When I came in this area and mark on me shirt back from a man – I don't read, I never been to a school for reading – no – I never write a letter from me born neither do I read one (*uses past tense then corrects himself*), or read one I should say. Now look, I ask a guy over there-so if he can read and he say 'yeh'; I say 'mark on this shirt back "I am sorrow"' (*pauses*) – you know anybody like it? – you know anybody like sorrow? (*louder*) **you know anybody like sorrow?** (*Lee; 'Uhhn' negatively*) Look what is sorrow man, eh! you don' know anybody like it, but where **joy come from?**! – question ask again – where you get joy from? Without sorrow where you get any damn joy from? You 'fraid of sorrow, you say; 'I love joy' you fool? (*Lee; 'true'*), you **fool**; you don't have no knowledge of godliness. Is out of sorrow come joy – you can't know what is hungry when you never been hungry, you can't tell what is sleep, glorious sleep (*pause*); is who put you to sleep? – is my father..."

How can someone without a sense of the dialogue between good and evil be "collective respectively" asks Daley? However, our own

question needs to take different form – where is the link between the generalised millenarian religious ethos of Jamaica now, and Kant's anthropological introspection into his own society in the 1790s?

The Caribbean connection

The link we can establish is in the first instance a historical one, and it is a bridge in which we have to accept both similarity and difference. Whatever the links between Kingston and Königsberg, one thing is sure, Kant was not Jamaican and nor are contemporary Jamaicans 'Kantians' in any strict sense. The emergence of Jamaican civil society came about precisely as part of the massive global disruption that Kant was observing, and the egalitarian and emancipatory movements in which, with his rousseauian and republican sympathies, he was a vocal part. The links I am pointing to concern a kind of world-view and practical engagement in the world that places the individual at the centre of a rapidly changing civil and political milieu, and which places the burden of establishing community, on the variable capacities of such individuals. Notice in this respect how Daley negotiates the experience of arriving in an alien locality, with the phrase 'I am sorrow'. Undoubtedly there is a Presbyterian³ side of Kant that would be entirely unfamiliar in the Dionysian context of popular Jamaica and vice versa, but there is nevertheless a romantic, aesthetic ethos that is common to both.

The idea of a cosmopolitan right and a universal common sense are hardly conceivable without the demolition of implicit rights of autochthony and of relations between people that slavery, colonialism and late mercantilist commerce involved. For instance, Kant's belief that any person should be free to visit any other part of the world, because the globe belonged to no particular person or state, is after all the inverse image of the idea that any world power could justify its ownership of any place in the world simply by dint of its freedom to do so. Similarly, Kant's anthropology draws quite broadly on the recent ethnographic descriptions of Cook and others, to come to its comparative conclusions. His other theorising, since its intentions are universalist, is involved in its own moral dialectic with the international politics of the day.

The fairly speedy break-up of the Jamaican sugar states during the emancipation period of the 1830s and 1840s marked a new phase of Jamaican sociability, shown up in a burgeoning hill-side peasantry, widespread conversion to Christianity under the charismatic leadership of the fiery baptist emancipationist William Knibb, and also very shortly

³ I use the term advisedly, since Weber, in arguing that Kant's moral imperative exemplifies the ideal protestant spirit, goes so far as to claim that this was due to the philosopher's Scottish ancestry (1987: 270).

afterwards by mass migration beginning with the new canal project in Panama in the 1850s. By the turn of the century international migration for work had become a hallmark of Jamaican identity, and been framed into a repertoire of Creole institutional adaptations: family relationships, recreation, marketing and so on. A new kind of sociable sense had to be fashioned that could not rely on the tie to the land or on the concrete relationship to ancestors – notions of a continuity of past and future that had been part of the old world and had to some degree continued on the slave estate.

Hence, the Jamaican experience of modernity was rather different from the equivalent experience in Europe, an almost complete break that necessitated a much more general adaptation to the New World economy. And yet, the economic practices in which people were engaged remained largely non-industrial – selling, artisanship and unskilled labour. The continuous uncertainty in relation to a weak state, and a rapidly shifting global market erupted in a series of millenarian outbursts, most significantly in the 1860s, when two of Jamaica's most popular religious movements, poco-mania and revival Zion, were formed; and again in the 1930s, when rastafarianism emerged from a plethora of other small cults. This is a process of adequation that has continued into the present day – the adaptation from a concrete teleology of experience to an eclectic common sense based on a universalist sense of identity.

A comparison with Gudeman's Colombian peasants is useful here. Gudeman suggests how the ways in which his informants talked about production resembled the French physiocrats of the 18th Century in their ideas of a relationship of reciprocity between land and labour. But in Jamaica popular expression centres much more on the relationship between individuals and their personal 'style' than between people and the land. Walk into any bar where you are well known, and as likely as not, you will be regaled with the phrase "One blood!", or simply addressed as "blood", a metaphorical intimation that, regardless of the colour of your skin, you still have a right to be in the same place at the same time. I cannot think of a much more accurate symbolic expression of Kant's idea of cosmopolitan right than that.⁴ This is a phrase and a way of thinking that is ubiquitous in Jamaica. Not many countries have had a popular hit with a song that goes 'Every man has an equal right to live and be free'. The syncretisation of Christianity with post-emancipation experience has been converted into an egalitarian view of other individuals as being 'bredren' and 'sistren' (brothers and sisters) under God, combined, as I have already suggested with a characteristic

⁴ Similarly, the thinkers of the enlightenment would have fully understood, Bob Marley's frequent elision of the words 'revelation' and 'revolution'.

personality style which could be aptly described as 'heroic individualism'. Typically, as anthropologists we tend to think of utterances like these in terms of the kinds of speech genres, language games or forms of discourse in which they seem embedded. Once again, in universalising certain kinds of moral claims above others the Jamaicans have more in common with Kant than they do with our own intuition in favour of relativisation.

But, the usefulness of the idea of common sense, to me, comes in some less dramatic examples: my own research finally centred on one particular institution, the wake sequence that surrounds the death of someone in a neighbourhood. This is a ritual sequence that holds people together more than almost any other in the place where I was living. The wake has a lot of classically Durkheimian elements: it is a group event of singing and dance; it is highly effervescent; and involves a lot of technical discussion of the music; and the playing of games like dominoes.

But the social context in which the wake is set is much more dispersed than the typical Durkheimian picture. In the wake, the singers and drinkers will include a wide ranging selection of people from the countryside, returnee migrants from the US, from England, and elsewhere. The wake seems to provide an important representation of finality for the people involved, as both Durkheim and Kant would emphasise. It does not provide an image of a structured society, rather something more loosely organised, something perhaps more like Kant's idea of a common sense in a highly individuated and very often non-consensual society.

Both in terms of the actual individual discussion and judgement involved in this kind of performance, and also the reasons for which people actually attend these events – the enjoyment and pleasure that they derive from them – Kant's description, it seems to me, leaves more open to the aesthetic faculties of individuals, and their imaginative engagement in the performance itself, than Durkheim's description of ritual could.

Common sense can end up being a blanket term for almost any aspect of social life, but I think, if we stay fairly close to Kant's abstract definition, it can be of some use in a case like Jamaica. For Kant, common sense is formulated around moments in our experience when we apprehend finality, and suggests the way in which individual experience is woven into a more general teleology. It is open-ended and not centred on specific, concrete relations – save the relationships with other individuals. In an extremely non-homogeneous society like Jamaica, it is helpful in providing a starting-point from which to understand the pragmatics that organise daily interaction.

As we have seen one of the problems in dealing with social life in a place like Jamaica, is the sheer variety of experience that the island embodies. Whatever methods we use to try to order our understanding of Caribbean social life, we are going to have to start from the premise that Jamaica does not present anything like the structured conglomerate that normal anthropological approaches have tried to look for. This has tended to lead to two main approaches. The first one is typified by M.G. Smith's plurality thesis (1955) – that the Caribbean is a fragmentary social entity, which has only been held together by colonial force. Alternatively, in more consensualist mode, R.T. Smith (1956) has tried to find the equivalents of West African kinship and other forms of social organisation in Jamaica's class system and race hierarchy, emphasising those elements which most suggest homogeneity in Caribbean life.

The emphasis that I want to give is rather different. The middle passage of slavery and the emancipation period, as C.L.R. James (1980), Eric Williams (1944), and others have noted, wiped the social slate clean, and were part of a total shift in philosophical thinking at the end of the 18th century. With emancipation, thousands of Jamaicans were put in the position to adapt themselves to an entirely new set of global economic relations, and to a new abstract religion with its own symbolic repertoire. Here is why, then, I think it is valuable to compare Jamaican experience to some ideas of the first thinker of modernity. It is precisely the faculties that Kant describes in an abstract way that the Jamaicans have been forced to make for themselves in a pragmatic one. The most salient amongst these is the kind of open-ended common sense experienced in the Jamaican bar, in the wake, or listening to that ubiquitous sound reggae. Caribbean anthropology has often fallen down simply because its ideal types are too inflexible to deal with the kind of adaptivity that Caribbean life has historically necessitated.

I argued at the beginning of this paper that for Kant common-sense represented our faculty for sociability – a faculty mediated in different moments of experience by a relation to a sense of final purpose in the workings of the world. As I suggested, this view of common sense as a kind of practical religious thinking – a grasping of the universal in dispersed moments of experience – shares a lot with the way in which Jamaicans express their own identity. It also shares a great deal with Durkheim's view of the place of religion in social life. Kant's sources; the primarily Christian ideals of sisterhood and brotherhood that he draws on found their way into Jamaican thinking in the most vivid manner possible – and, not surprisingly so, given the form in which emancipationist Christianity entered people's lives on the island and was taken up syncretically.

If a lot of what Kant says about the weaving together of the universal and the particular in our common understanding is lost on us

now it certainly does present a very important statement about the mode in which people on the margins of the Anglo-saxon cultural orthodoxy have had to adapt their experience to an industrialising world. The Jamaicans and Kantian idealism give us two quite striking angles of vision on that problem, which can perhaps be re-figured as the question – what happens when stable social relationships mediated by a relation to the land are disrupted and replaced with an unstable relationship between people and their shared environment? Kant's moral philosophy starts with the troubled relationship of individual and civil freedom under the absolutist state and comes up with a principle of cosmopolitan right linked to scientific. Jamaican civil society since emancipation has been cosmopolitan by necessity – forging links outside the nation state because there was no alternative. The result is – in a society for so long dependent on labour migration for its existence – a kind of cultural-aesthetic signature recognisable anywhere in the world.

What interested me in the pastor's eulogy was his success in eliding Kingston's bus system with the idea of final judgement – a success, I have argued, that depends on grasping something that Kant also understood – the degree to which, even in a complex social context, ordinary experience depends for its meaning on a shared teleology. In conclusion I would like to reiterate the following points –

1. I argued that Kant's common sense judgement is a faculty that appeals to a universal kind of sociability and in this way pre-figures Durkheim's understanding of the relationship between ritual and the sense of society. But for Kant common sense is realised in the imaginative faculties of individuals and incorporates a wider range and a more relative and open-ended field of communal experience than Durkheim's 'society'. Kant is often understood as the prime expositor of dry Reason. But his work taken as a whole suggests that, as people, we are the product of often competing faculties – aesthetic, moral, logical. In this sense the current pendulum swing towards an anthropological 'poetics' or aesthetics against the logicist axis is nothing too new, but rather part of an almost cyclical revision of the cannon which can be seen in the preceding work of Dilthey, Benedict or Sapir and now Tyler and Clifford.

2. I suggested that in order to understand Jamaican sociability we need to have concepts at hand that allow us to understand the variety and individuality of Caribbean experience. I am certainly not suggesting that Kant and Kingston are the only routes to understanding that experience. Nevertheless Kant's view-point is useful – partly because he sees aspects of social experience which are often placed beyond the bounds of anthropological enquiry, but also because the social and political contradictions that Kant described, have yet to be resolved by the Jamaicans – or for that matter by other peoples on the

periphery of the first world. In practising ethnography we are used to reconciling elements of social life that are familiar to us with elements that estrange us – part of the process by which anthropology chases its own tail historiographically. One of the purposes of this article has been to relativise our own familiarity with Kant in order to consolidate our understanding of Jamaican experience.

3. It strikes me that the modern remit of anthropology is changing as the world changes its political and economic shape. In the work especially of Durkheim and Mauss, anthropology has had a stand-point from which to criticise the methods and scope of Euro-American sociological and economic thinking. But the enclosed mechanical solidarities that were once its object of focus have been all but swept away both in theory and in practice. Here is where it can be valuable to return to something that has always been central to anthropological thought, that is; how people make sociability with the faculties they develop and how sociability makes them. For this reason I have found it interesting to go back to one of the first anthropologists in the modern sense of the term and to an idea with a weighty social history – common sense.

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IN SEARCH OF STREET CHILDREN: MALOQUEIROS AND MOTHERS

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Just who is a street child, or a *menino de rua*? Journalists, bureaucrats, 'technical consultants' and destitute children, among others, have been debating the question. This article examines the use of the terms in English and Portuguese, juxtaposing some of the voices in this debate and ultimately suggesting a conception based on the ideas of children who sleep in the streets of the cities of Recife and Olinda in Northeast Brazil.

The use of the term *street children* in English is not new. In his 1884 book *Street Arabs and Gutter Snipes: The Pathetic and Humorous Side of Young Vagabond Life in the Great Cities with Records of Work for their Reclamation*, George C. Needham uses the term in passing to describe the children who in his words "through the stress of circumstances, are forced into a course of life which tends to the multiplication of criminals and the increase of the dangerous classes" (Needham, 1884: iii). But until about a decade ago, terms such as street urchin, waif, or street arab, used in the early part of this century, or runaway or abandoned child, heard subsequently, were far more common English-language terms than was *street child*.

In *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Northeast Brazil*, Scheper-Hughes observes that in the 1960s the children who regularly slept in the streets of the town she calls Bom Jesus were known simply as *moleques*, or scamps (1992: 240). But as a descriptive term, *meninos de rua* existed far earlier. One instance of its use can be found in Jorge Amado's 1937 novel, *Captains of the Sand*, where a group of children sleeping in Salvador's abandoned wharves are referred to, at least in passing, by the term. But it was not until the 1980s that the phrase became commonplace. *Meninos carentes* (needy children), *crianças abandonadas* (abandoned children), or the more derogatory and still popular terms *pivetes* (roughly knaves) or *trombadinhas* (roughly

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