

Arendt, Lyotard and the Political Realm.

In *The Lectures on Kant's Political Theory*, Hannah Arendt argues that Kant's *Critique of Judgment* contains the seeds of a political theory. She relates the reflective judgment of taste to political judgment and action. Action, as the quality of freedom in the world of appearances, is the condition of plurality. Arendt examines the political implications of Kant's critical thinking and the thought that critical thinking presupposes universal communicability. This communicability implies, according to Arendt, a concrete sociability. Kant's *sensus communis* would refer to an empirical community, a public realm of a plurality of social individuals, rising up spontaneously, provisionally and unexpectedly.

The task of the political in Lyotard's view, however, is to testify to the *différend*, i.e. to suppressed genres of discourse. This crucial heterogeneity is ontologically inherent in communication because in expressing one phrase you deny all other phrases to become manifest and therefore they cannot be taken into account. Every linkage, every phrase, is a triumph of one genre above all other genres of discourse. We shall argue that the different conceptions of Arendt's and Lyotard's acknowledgement for "difference" and plurality, lead to different views on the public sphere and being-in-community. According to Lyotard, the Kantian *sensus communis* is a suprasensible Idea, a touchstone, without attaching any reality to it. In making the *sensus communis* concrete, the universal shareability, lying at the basis of this *sensus communis*, would blatantly annul the differences between people. Therefore, Lyotard wants to dismantle the illusion of a concrete community in order to avoid one genre wronging the other by solving the *différend* in the idiom of only one of both parties, i.e. one genre becoming totalitarian and no longer testifying to the different genres. Because Lyotard radicalizes the *différend* in this way, the *sensus communis* can only be a suprasensible Idea and not a concrete sociability as Arendt presupposes. In rethinking the public sphere, this paper ratifies the importance of Arendt's elaboration of the public realm as a concrete community in contrasting it with Lyotard's transcendental view on togetherness.