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### *Ubiquitous Communication: A New Age of Enlightenment?*

“If it is now asked, ‘Do we presently live in an enlightened age?’ the answer is, ‘No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment.’”  
(Kant, I.)

In general, we can say The Enlightenment was a movement in European thought, between the XV and XVIII centuries, the Renaissance and the Romantic periods, which emphasized the centrality of skepticism about received ideas, independent critical thought, and the invention of new systems of knowledge. The period encompassed an ethical value of turning away from the darkness and turning toward the light – it means The Enlightenment. But what is the core of this turning toward the light? We can explore Kant’s concept: “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. Sapere Aude! [dare to know] "Have courage to use your own understanding!"--that is the motto of Enlightenment. What is required for this? “Nothing is required for this enlightenment, however, except freedom; and the freedom in question is the least harmful of all, namely, the freedom to use reason publicly in all matters.” (Kant, Immanuel, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784)) It is unquestionable that this concept of Enlightenment is only one of the many concepts (e.g. the Kantian concept of Enlightenment was already criticized by Kant’s contemporary Hamann from a skeptical – Humeian – point of view). However, as I can see it contains some necessary elements which are inseparable from all possible concepts of Enlightenment. First of all, a larger realm of personal freedom is required. Secondly, the possibility of the public and private use of reason is also required. Thirdly, courage and the possibility to use one’s own understanding are required. If one should deny even one of these requirements the possibility of Enlightenment is denied. In my paper I discuss these questions from the ubiquitous communication point of view. I do not intend to give a historical concept of Enlightenment, but a modern one fitting to the necessary criterion of traditional concept of Enlightenment. So I understand The Enlightenment is rather an ongoing process than a finished period.

In the first question, I emphasize that the freedom is inseparable from responsibility. If The Enlightenment is a new share of freedom it means a new share of responsibility. I bring my attention into focus on boundaries of freedom and responsibility. We can see that responsibility emerges not only in the case of real and free acts but also in the case of their possibility. In other words, the unrealized but possible actions possess responsibility. In consequence, if there is any change in the realm of possibilities of our actions it means necessary change in our freedom and responsibility. So if we can characterize the changes of the space of actions we can characterize the changes of freedom and the concept of Enlightenment in the same way.

In the second question, I underline the necessary relationship between public-private use of reason and the criterions of communication. The public space of reason is an area of communication. There is no change to the public sphere without a change to the sphere of communication and its practices. Since The Enlightenment means a new structure of public-private sphere it requires a new structure for the space of communication. I think the most relevant and exciting question is whether it is true vice versa? Do the new structure of the space of communication and new possibilities in this area produce a new age of Enlightenment? My answer is yes – the ubiquitous communication means a new age of Enlightenment. The main reason of my answer is the sense of responsibility. More possibilities in the public-communication space result in more freedom and responsibility and the sense of the extended responsibility inspires new and more actions. In this meeting-point we can find three spheres interacting with each other: a) sphere of communicative possibilities b) sphere of actions c) sphere of responsibility. The third is a bridge between a) and b), it especially provides a way from b) to a) by power of its motivation. Certainly, there are more possibilities of motivation so we can call this a moral argument for a kind of social-communicative action.

In the third question, I emphasize that the fruits of technology assist an evolution to a more enlightened society and personality. Moreover it is a basic and very relevant question. In the age of telecommunications convergence the distances of space-time get shorter and shorter, and the communication itself converges closer and closer simultaneously. It seems from the perspective of current science that we have reached the extreme limits. The speed of the transfer of information cannot be much faster; we cannot eliminate the velocity of flight. The compression-decompression of data and signals needs time; and the time needed can never be reduced to zero. This simultaneousness could be the next stage but it can never be realized from the perspective of the distinct communicators. If this is true, then the modern age of telecommunications provides the final and most favorable milieu for completion of Enlightenment. The modern age of telecommunications as a field of possible actions involves responsibility. As we can see, if we do not make the best of our possibilities we are responsible for that too. Accordingly all of this, the modern age of the ubiquitous communication gives more possibilities, more responsibility and it requires more courage. But which phrase is right: more or most? If our modern age provides the final and most favorable public-communicational space for social action we should use the phrase 'most'. Accordingly we are entitled to diagnose a new age of Enlightenment because of mere superlative degree.

First and last I picked up three elements from the traditional concept of Enlightenment. My firm belief is that we cannot separate the concepts of the freedom-responsibility, the public-communicational space and the courage to act from the concept of Enlightenment. Therefore, if we can show radical changes in the case of these three elements then we need to accept radical change of the process of Enlightenment. Since the modern age of telecommunications is a change that sets the scene for all of three elements, we are entitled to define a new age of Enlightenment.

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