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Reality of Tomorrow: Augmented Reality

The morning sun creeps in through the gap in my curtain, illuminating my bedroom as I get myself up and off the bed. I get ready and grab the AR (Augmented Reality) headset from my desk, attach it to the left side of my head and click the switch. In the corner of my view I see that it is Monday at 8:20pm, that I have a lecture at 9pm and it tells me that it is likely to rain later in the evening so I should grab my umbrella. I open the BBC news channel where they are talking about how AR technology has been implemented by researchers and professionals, such as using 3D inter-linked holographic images to see the internal structure of a brain, or how files are easily sent across the root connection.

The virtual map taking me to University pops up along with a message from my friend asking me to take a video of the lecture for her with my headset. In classical mechanics, Ilya opens up the inter-linked experimental kit and conducts a mid-lecture experiment; the international Japanese student beside me still appears slightly uneasy so I ask, "Are you keeping up okay?" to which the translation app repeats for her in Japanese, and when she replies in Japanese the app repeats in English, "Yes, thank you, I'm starting to get used to it." Mathematics for Physicists starts with Martin opening a massive tetrahedron in the centre of the lecture theatre and recalls our last lecture on vectors.

When walking to lunch I always go on the slower yellow virtual lane with my friends whereas the fast walkers go on the green lane beside us. Later in the evening we have a French physicist coming in to give her lecture where our headsets help us greatly by translating for us – she will be the 5th non-English speaking speaker of the term. I head home and before going to bed, put aside my headset and prepare for the next day."

Contrary to virtual reality (VR), which creates a new electronic space for the user to interact with, the interaction of AR is braced to the real world. In my story above a very limited example of its use was described and in very little detail. AR may not have received as much attention as VR has, but the technology is without a doubt coming along and will soon be the cornerstone in many human interactions including the education system. If we look carefully at the past, present and future we can foresee where AR may take us. Many applications already available on smartphones and will-come-to-be can be implemented into AR to see their effect in the fullest. If Birmingham is to become a top UK university it must be bold in embracing the use of AR, yet disciplined enough to not let AR take over the lifestyle of the younger generations and allow them to overlook the importance of reality.