

## **FLASHFORWARD 2049!**

Cladded in tight blue denims; tattered on the knees by design in what he called “dirty jeans”, you’d almost think he was a madhouse escapee (madhouse? At least that’s what he said is synonymous with a mental hospital when I addressed him with that phrase the other day). I remember to have possessed shorts with such a design (having holes in the rear end) when I was a toddler; not in a fashionable way of course. I had to tie a shirt around my waist to cover my behind, again, not in a fashionable way. It was a strategy to cover the holes which so much exposed my lack. Hair uncombed, red eyes, undone nails, .... he doesn’t stink but you can smell his insanity from a mile away. Always glued to his computer or sometimes an iPad; he is hemmed in so many uncommon bits and bobs. So out of this world; my world. Literally. I like the V-collar T-shirt he’s wearing today though, at least for a change. He might be drawing some inspiration from Zuckerberg I suppose. Arrrgh, as if imitating dress sense will catapult him into a similar caliber of success.

“Duh, why worry about insufficient disk space in your MacBook? just put it in the cloud” he phoned it in a rather cocky manner. “As a matter of fact, just get a Google Chrome Book, it’s the best cloud computing device” he recommended.

“just put it in the cloud, ....in the cloud?” mmh, what could that mean? I found myself totally harebrained to fathom that statement as I walked towards him.

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“Hey, .... uuuh” I interjected as he terminated the call but I couldn’t proceed for he hurriedly put back his headphones. I was left hanging. Numb and dumb; he says so many things I don’t understand anyway. I succumbed.

Maybe not.

“Ehem (clears throat) ...uh mmm, John”. The thought of the “cloud thingies” terrorized my mind so I pressed on to understand what he meant.

“John!” I called him out again. What an egocentric introvert! I flew all the way from Africa to Harvard, and the gods of my grandfather would be dammed to learn that I waltz into John in a self-driving Uber car on the day we entered the glory of mighty Harvard. A self-driving car was altogether crazed up for a native African from the jungle, mix it up with John and you have a daylight *nightmare*. He’s ridiculous! His mannerisms and maneuvers always gave me a picture of how the robotic voice in that Uber car could act and look like if it were to put on flesh.

“Hey, John” I tapped on his shoulder with an index finger like the way he does on his iPad. He pulled out his headphones and exclaimed “I’m in class!” It’s been four weeks on this campus but barely have I seen him in class with me, no, not even once. We’re in the same class of Architecture, I wonder how John intend to make it here. Poor soul!

He gave me a what’s-the-matter-with-you eye as if I was some kind of a weirdo. I tightened up my belt, with an innocent look I asked “What do you mean you’re in

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class?” He threw his headphones on his working table and run both of his palms across his long black hair; as though he was stirring up some wisdom.

“ha-haha” he chuckled “Mali, you don’t have to go to a classroom to be in the classroom” he mockingly explained. Looking like a confused comedian who’s run out of jokes, I popped up my eyes, pulled up a chair to his side and asked “what do you mean?” “How about putting up stuff in the cloud, how exactly do you do that?”

He didn’t put much attention to the latter but then he asked;

“How many students enrolled for this program?” Twenty-five I said.

“How many of those actually go into the classroom, including you?” Well, it’s just eleven of us. I just thought that some of you are unruly or you decided to....

“wait a minute!” he butted in. .... “But then don’t you find it weird that more than half of the students don’t attend classes but their names always appear on different class projects?”

Uh huh...that, I leaned forward to help my ears and my mind in giving attention to him.

“See, my iPad is an educational tablet. It’s a filtered gadget that is loaded with Mobile Apps necessary for my education. It has barred functionalities for calls and social networking integrations. That’s quite ideal because it helps me focus in my studies.” I nodded in unison. “When you go to class today, you’ll see some Nano Cameras fitted

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at the top corners of the classroom, they are properly fitted there to transmit a live telecast through the University's student portal".

So is this the reason why the lecturers use microphones all the time? "ha-ha, do you even know what that means?" I just chuckled but he continued "Cameras capture a video feed while the microphones capture their voice as they teach. Now when they are writing on the smart boards, whatever that they write is connected to a system that displays it on one part of our display screen through the student portal"

wow! I didn't know that, I was intrigued. "Now why do I need to be in class with all that, I don't need to. It's like I have the whole class on my computer"

But how exactly do you ask questions when a lecture is on when you need a clarification from a professor; and how exactly does the professor answer your question? Yap! you can't beat that with technology!

"it seems like you skipped some orientation Mali". He shook his head as he pulled out his drawer and fumbled his hand in there to pull out something. "These are what we call Google Glasses amigo" I snatched them from his hand in amazement as I tried them on. But he continued talking "Have you noticed that professors wear these when they are in class?" I was so fascinated with the design of such glasses that I couldn't hear what he said. "Maaaaaaliiii" he echoed me to his attention. He repeated the question! Well, I thought professors here have very rare eye problems that they needed these kind of glasses! "Oh silly! When the professor is teaching, she or he can directly

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receive text messages from us which she or he can view through the Google glasses. That's how we ask questions when a lecture is in session".

But John, you know how there are different types of learners, Auditory learners, visual learners, "Kinesthetic learners and reading/writer learners" we finished the sentence together and he said as I put down the Google glasses "Yeah I know that Mali and..." Wait I haven't finished, I revolted. What am trying to say is that we both know that kinesthetic learners require to handle something in order to properly learn, how does technology help them with that? I asked defensively.

"I know you know about 3D printing right?" Damn right I do! "Well, what happens is that when kinesthetic learners want to have a feel of what they are learning, they can actually just go to the lab and print it. Just like we do with our architecture models, you can rapidly prototype ideas and explore product designs.... wait a minute" He lifted up a square shaped transparent glass-like gadget which I first thought was a material for his next architectural project. "Now this is the best, there isn't anything in the world of learning than this". He fumbled his fingers on the glass and pulled out the whole Colosseum amphitheater right before my eyes; it was there, hanging in the air. "Whooooah, this is utter crazzzzy!" I exclaimed with much excitement and amazement. "Oh yes! I told you, this technology is the best not just for kinesthetic learners" He emphasized. "It is called the holographic technology; learning through holograms". All the structure engineering, creative designs which our professor referred to; I couldn't

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only see them but have a feel. “Nobody, I repeat, nobody can ever forget anything if they were to learn using holograms!” I retorted in definite terms. “You see Mali; this technology is the reason I believe many scholars will graduate with solid skills. Many will obtain practical skills easily with this technology” I nodded to his semantics as I zoomed out the Colosseum even more.

So basically education is almost 100 percent learner centered huh? You learn when you want and how you want it! “As a matter of fact, what you want to learn also. You have a choice to attend classes or learn online. You have a choice to watch simulation videos, lectures, listen to audios, watch animated lessons or read text slides.” He concluded.

Quite intriguing! Now tell me about the cloud stuff. As I said so, my Apple watch made a loud snoozing sound just as John also got one on his watch. It was a notification that a class was about to start in 5 minutes. Ouch! Am running out of time, I have to rush for class.

Will talk to you later mate! He laughed so hard and said “you don’t have to go there dude! You can attend a class from right here” I skidded through the door as I made my way out of the dorm to the classroom while I exclaimed “please take a bath. Don’t tell me there’s a technology for it” I left him in stitches.

I had a lot of thoughts running through my mind as I made my way to the classroom. There was a lot I didn’t know about effective learning ways through technology that I needed to know. I thought about how I didn’t even need to get a scholarship to come

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and learn at Harvard. I could have actually remained in Africa and learn quite alright. All I needed to have was a strong internet connectivity. In my helter-skater moves, I got a beep on my Apple watch. “IT’S BYOD LECTURE”.

“what the heck is BYOD!” I didn’t know I exclaimed that loudly ...

“It’s called Bring Your On Device dumb head” I passerby reacted.

“I hear you Mrs. Einstein!” I retorted back as if I understood a single word she said. But I had an idea. Shush! How did I even make it to Harvard? Looks like I’ am still in the 2020s, this is 2049 for God’s sake! I reprimanded myself.

As I got into the auditorium, I found everyone gripping their iPad devices with earphone plugged into their ear lobes. I wonder what’s going on. Must be the BYOD animal, I thought. There wasn’t even a lecturer in there, wondered why those classmates were even there. I whispered “google *BYOD*” into my Apple watch (it was probably the only technology I used the most) a video popped up from YouTube, but it couldn’t play; I needed to plug earphone into it. It was a five-minute video which explained what BYOD is and how to use it.

I remembered that the University gave iPads to each one of us that had so many Architecture relevant Mobile Apps, some of which were synchronized to my Apple watch. Unfortunately, I wasn’t used to taking it to classrooms and I didn’t know about BYOD. I discovered that the Professor had communicated about it in advance via our

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online class which obviously popped up through forced notification on our iPads. But well, I didn't see it.

“Buddy!” I pinched one of my classmates. I'm sorry for disturbing you but uh, I forgot my gadget could you be of any help” before I even finished the sentence, a live telecast popped up on a big screen in the auditorium. It was a set up “Skype video call”.

“Hello ladies and gentlemen!” echoed the professor's voice from the big white screen in the auditorium. The technician from the control room behind us switched of the lights to help us get a good view. I noticed that's where they terminate and answer the skype calls.

“Well, I hope you all have gone through the notes I sent through Evernote. I also saved some videos in the class Dropbox, I'm sure you have seen them” Wait, what? Looks like am one confused namby-pamby.

“Those resources were meant to offer an introduction to our lesson today. Well, I will be offering this lesson through teleconferencing to two other Universities. So you're one big global class” He continued as he began his lesson.

The classes ended.

“Buddy, your desk table is mounted with a functional computer, you could have just pulled it out to ninety-degrees angle and log in with your details to access everything on



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your iPad” The classmate I asked for help, advised. “whaaaaat!” I thought I was dreaming or something.

Every encounter left me with many thoughts. Yet again many different thoughts were running through my mind as I made my way back to the dorm; just like it was when I was coming out of it. I had so many questions and I reasoned I needed to have a complete personal orientation on technology and education.

I said to Marjory as we made our way out of the auditorium “Am sorry am quite new to this technology education stuff..buh uh, I have a question”

“Uh huh! Shoot!” She gave an affirmative. Well, does this whole thing of learning online, having a professor teach students from different universities once and so on and so forth have like a special name or something? I think am far way behind and need to understand some things and learn how to use them. She was at that moment finishing converting his handwritten short notes into electronic Microsoft word file by using a Livescribe technology. The use of paperwork is completely eliminated here.

“You know that you can also just take notes like these with your handwriting in Evernote?” Oh yeah, yeah I know that. I responded, just to sound knowledgeable at least. “Now, to answer your question” she begun “There’s something that is called blended learning, this is a system where a professor uses a mix of online and onsite learning both in delivery and provision of resources. Flipped classroom is what we just had today; where a professor offers learning tools, and delivers a lecturer for a short

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while online and let you study further on your own elsewhere”. By this time, we were standing by the entrance of my room, but I had to let her finish “But this whole thing is part of a larger innovation called MOOC which stands for Massive Open Online Courses” she continued.

“Tell him about the amazon kindle also” shouted John from the room. He was probably resting now. She simply laughed it off as she bid me goodbye.

“Hey Mali, so I’d like to give you an orientation of some of these technologies” Exactly first thing I wanted to ask you of, I responded joyfully.

“so let’s start with the cloud. Please take a seat, it will probably be a long presentation”.

Let’s get on!

“Well, the cloud is a computer terminology that refers to information that is available on a virtual platform. Your information is not much safer in your computer than in a cloud. And you don’t have the disadvantage of storage space running out in the cloud. So by saying put it in the cloud I meant he should keep the information in one of such storage facility which are virtually available. These are such systems as Google Drive, Drop Box, OneDrive or Mega”. Alright, I had thoughts of telescopes running in my mind. Ha-ha!

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John continued by asking “Have you heard of MOOC” I was talking to Marjory when I was coming from class, she did quite a good outline of what that is and I have understood.

“Have you heard of Augmented Reality?” I’ve heard of it before but I’ve never seen or have an experience with such, I retorted.

“Augmented Reality (AR) is the best for personalized learning. It helps in so many ways including giving a 3D visualization of certain concepts for better understanding.” Wait, before you proceed, how does this differ from Artificial Intelligence?

“Aaaargh, what if I finish on AR first? Anyway, it’s okay. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be explained through examples; your Apple watch is synched to an educational tablet right?” Oh yes, I said.

“Well, the machine knows when you have studied, how you’re fairing in you studies, it gives you reminders of classes to attend, more like a personal assistant. That’s what Artificial Intelligence is. It processes information and triggers reminders and notification based on your personalized academic data”

So I knew how to work around it but never understood what it is. How funny.

“Well, back to Augmented Reality, maybe I should also compare it with Virtual Reality”

...bang bang bang!

There was a big bang on the door! We both snapped and stood still.

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Bang bang bang! “Wake up from that bed Mali” the voice of my grandfather. I immediately snapped into reality, it’s 06:00 Am, 02/02/2017; it was all a dream. I was glad a travelled to the future and I experienced technology I have never heard of.

Patiently waiting for the year 2049!