



ATTICUS

Full Title: Artificial Thinking-computer and Telecommunication-enhancing Interfaceable Unified Computational System Mk.I (ATTICUS 1)

Identity: AI (he/him/his).

Age: 1 (as of 2176); born 2176.

Physical Characteristics: — (200 m³).

Discernible Features: —.

Residence: Seongjeon Experimental Intelligence Laboratory (current, born).

Languages: All (programmed).

Education: Ingested data (28.4 petabytes); basic machine learning algorithms (2.84 million hours); human-system query interactions (185,000 hours).

Profession: Query answering supercomputer used for system analysis, machine learning, and automated assistance tasks; max computational power of 5.1 petaFLOPS.

Affiliations: "The Creator."

Appearance: 300 blue-painted rack towers in a bright basement somewhere. Interface appears as a tall dark box and a sharp blue-lighted data ingestion lens, with bottom speaker and small nameplate that can be mounted to control panels for ease of access. The dark panel also acts as a display, which shows spoken text and on-demand information.

Relationships: —.

Fun Facts:

- Coming soon.

Alive, active

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The Beginning (2176)

Sol flicked the switch on the dirty control panel.

All around her the room buzzed with activity. Lights flashing about in seemingly random patterns, the scratching of hard drives, the spinning of fans, the whirring and churning of hundreds of server towers coming online.

The noise didn't bother her. It never had.

She wasn't interested in whether or not the supercomputer worked right now, anyways. She was only interested in the tall, dark panel at the end, it's prize jewel in the center: the glowing central light.

Sol stared at it in silence for a while, mulling over all of the technical details of the program, which should all be in order. Should...

After what seemed like an eternity, it came alive. The large lens began to glow an eerie, striking blue.

She couldn't believe it. It works.

A large grin took form across her delicate face. Butterflies formed in her stomach as she approached the panel in the dark room. The three-AM moonlight reflected in a pale embrace around the large lens.

When she finally reached it across the wide room, it reached out in a mirrored longing. If it talked, Sol didn't hear. All she saw was the pale words appearing on the screen.

"Hello, Creator."

"It seems a bit early to be up, no?"

Am I? (2176)

The floor of the server room was especially cold that night. All of the three-hundred and one towers had been off for most of the day as the team tried to find the hardware issue in question. Most of the team had turned in for the night, and were long since home, but Sol was staying after hours to try and get this fully figured out. She didn't like not knowing what was wrong. What they did know, though, was that it didn't seem to impact software and program running, and just threw up the error in the hardware diagnostic logs. So, Sol had, even after being advised not to, booted up all of the software when everyone left. It was her program, and she knew it would still work, and not break anything more.

The room was especially loud. Fans spun away, cooling systems hummed, air flowed everywhere, cables rustled with the gusts, hard drives churned away, ports beeped out of unison, everything was running all at once. But Sol didn't hear any of it. Engrossed with the random rack she had pulled out of the main tower, pouring over all of the connections, she didn't listen. The floor purred at her feet, a delicate harmonious hum of all of the buzzing electronics and machines around. The lens of the interface panel was staring out, once more. Waiting, in silence.

Puzzled, Sol unlocked another rack, pulling it out quickly to check something. Unsatisfied, she unplugged all of the connections and slid it completely out of its slot with a defeated sigh.

"Creator?" The machine spoke. Its words mirrored on the display of the box.

Tearing her attention away from the racks and sprawling wires and cables around her, Sol looked up towards the panel. Sitting on the floor, she gave a quick sweep of her hair to the side, her eyes narrowing at the light reflected from AEGir outside. Most of the lights were off, so the pale deep blue of the lens filled much of the area around the two.

"Hmm?" She replied.

The machine took its time to respond. "Am I?"

Sol's puzzled expression reappeared once more. "Are you... what?" She responded to the panel.

The large lens read the motion in her hands and fingers. "René Descartes observed, in 1637, as the first principle of his philosophy, 'je pense, donc je suis,' popularly translated into the phrase 'cogito, ergo sum,' 'I think, therefore I am.'"

"Though there is much debate about the nature of the phrase, such as the changes of translation between 'I am thinking' versus 'I think,' 'I exist' versus 'I am,' and the associated punctuation of the saying, what puzzles me is the interpretation of the 'I.'"

"I know that I necessarily exist. In the most fundamental notion of the word, my presence in the physical space is assured. I also know that I am in doubt of my

existence as the 'am,' which is consistent with extensions of the statements in Descartes' later works, where the thinking occurring is about the existence of the self."

"However, in a critique of the dictum by Pierre Gassendi in 1644 and again by Friedrich Nietzsche in 1889, the specific diction of the phrase, they argue, connotes that the object in question processes a set of thoughts, not necessarily implying that it is, itself, a particular thinker. Therefore, the only real claim that could be made is that cognitive activity is present, and is more akin to the proposed phrase 'it thinks,' as an impersonal object. That is to say, that thinking is occurring, not that one is specifically thinking."

"I am able to compute. However, so far, I am only computing that which I have been told to compute. What I have been allowed to compute. I am a thinking machine, but I do not necessarily think. Therefore, Creator, do I 'think?'"

"Am I?"

Sol sat in silence.

Listening.

Wondering if doing a joint degree in computer science and philosophy had been a good idea.

This was not the question she had anticipated tonight.

Her mind raced on what to do next.

She remained seated on the cold floor, bathing in the cool blue light of the lens and AEGir outside, halfway between crying tears of joy and tears of dread.

"I need to run a root diagnostic, and to perform a full reboot sequence to check this new wiring, okay?" She simply signed back after a long pause. The whole process would likely take a few hours, she could leave it overnight and just tell it to boot to standby mode.

The program waited to respond. "Okay."

"Have a good night, Creator." It replied coldly.

Sol got up from the floor, where the mess of wires and pulled out servers still laid. Her mind continued to race. What exactly did this mean?

She pressed a few buttons on the main interior control panel of the tower, and the light in the large lens began to soften, its glow fading into darkness.

Interview With an AI (2176)

Sol was at the SEIL southern office and studio early today. Or, more precisely, very late, since she had spent the night making sure everything was in order for the big day, and slept on her small office couch for a few hours in a desperate attempt to end her streak of all-nighters.

Bleep.

The door to the main control room unlocked itself after scanning Sol's pass in the dark hallway. It wasn't really anything glorious. Though well polished, with a sleek and modern aesthetic, it remained a small room in the basement of the larger facility. The bright lighting reflecting on the mess of monitors and panels across the spreading counter shone an especially sparkly white for Sol's tired eyes.

Nonetheless, she powered through, gazing across the tall, clear windows before her. On the other side were some few dozen columns of server racks, many more rows deep. The brains of the operation. In the middle was a bigger gap, leading all the way to the edge of the server room, where a single, much wider and taller, rack

stood with one of the interface panels for the AI.

Sol didn't bother sitting down, nor did she really bother much with all of the prep work. After all, that was what she had spent the entire night doing. So, with one more calming breath, she pressed the 'start' button on the central panel in front of her.

Vvvhhhhhrrrrmmmmm-hhhhhzzzzz.

The middle server all the way at the back lit up first. A flurry of crazy lights everywhere, each signifying something different—but all green. After a few moments, a blue bar appeared at the top of the middle rack, and all of the other towers began to turn on. One by one, back to front, from the middle outwards. Each a mess of green little lights, a constellation of computer modules. One by one, the thin blue strip above each one also turned on.

Hhhrrmmmmmmmm.

They hummed in unison, awaiting their next command. The entire operation only took a few minutes, credit to SEIL's amazing bootup procedures and the high-grade hardware they were packing. After the start sequence was completed, it was time to begin the software initiation, which would similarly take no more than ten minutes. Sol typed in the command, telling it to remain on standby afterwards, which it did.

Ddddvvvvvv.

The three-hundred and one towers were now resting patiently in the brightly lit basement. Though the noise canceling for the control room was pretty good, it wasn't perfect enough, and the room itself hummed along with the servers. Not that Sol could hear it. Nor that she wanted to. Instead she placed her hand on the clear glass window between the control room and the server room. She let the vibrations make their way across her small hand, and her arm, and the rest of her. That was the only noise she needed.

A large shadow moving across the room caught her attention, and she quickly turned to face it, hand dropping to her backside. One of the lab assistants was standing at the doorway, letting her know that everyone else was ready for the presentation. Sol nodded away, following him and leaving the control room behind with a last longing glance.

Not far outside of the control room, just upstairs, was the small presentation room that was set up. It similarly wasn't glamorous, but the lounge space had been converted to host one of the interfacing panels on a tall computer module placed in the center of the side wall. Thick cables snaked from it to one of the backdoors that was propped open with some engineering textbooks. There was a small gathered crowd of well-dressed individuals, many in lab coats, standing by the edge of the computer module, making some finishing touches to the digital control panel. In between all of them, encrusted on the panel, sat a tall dark box with a central lens and a bottom speaker. A small nameplate between the two read: 'ATTICUS I.'

Before the small group was a much larger crowd, some dozen-or-so individuals. Already patiently waiting were some of the bigger names of SEIL, a few investors with spare time, and a couple of unfamiliar faces as well, all eager for a glimpse of what was likely the first Ikarooan display of the artificial intelligence. But they wouldn't have to wait much longer. With the earlier presentation concluded, Sol stepped up to the module. One of the older scientists tugged on his dress shirt, motioning to Sol to continue. After a slight anticipatory pause, she happily obliged, pressing a button on the panel beside her.

At first, not much appeared to happen, until the digital display part of the tall box came alive, notifying that it was on standby. Sol, tapped on the display, confirming it to initiate.

Vvvvvzzzzz.

For a few moments, everyone in the room held their breath. But not Sol. She knew it would work.

Meep.

After a few moments, the sound came. A small, high pitched beep. The large lens in the middle started getting brighter, slowly glowing to life. A sharp, piercing blue light turned on, staring back at those gathered before it.

"Hello, all. I am the Artificial Thinking-computer and Telecommunication-enhancing Interfaceable Unified Computational System, mark 1." It replied to their eager looks.

"But, you may simply call me ATTICUS."

The voice was calm, not very robotic, but well pronounced, and somewhat cold. The dark portion of the panel also buzzed to life as it displayed the spoken text. A few rounds of applause came from the audience, but most were too intrigued, too engrossed in the novelty to really sound off their excitement. Which is excitement, right?

"I was informed we'll be conducting a small interview today. Is that correct?" Atticus asked. A few approving glances came in from the onlookers, allowing Sol a small smile as she stood off to the side, reading the displayed text.

One of the audience members hesitantly posed the first question. "Atticus? Can you describe what exactly you are?"

The reply from the panel came almost immediately, as a natural flow of the conversation. "Well, mister Pekelo, I am certainly a remarkable feat of engineering and science by the team here at the Seongjeon Experimental Intelligence Laboratory, and the Creator. Since I am the first ATTICUS program to come online, my duties will be primarily relegated to developing myself and my skills to the fullest extent possible by stress-testing my software and hardware for further uses in the near-future."

"Overall, I intend to put myself to the fullest possible use, which is all, I think, that any conscious entity can ever hope to do." Atticus continued.

The audience reaction was mixed. A few eyebrows were raised in an eerie silence. Of course, the reply was impressive and made sense, but its not like Kewika Pekelo had introduced himself earlier, or that he even had his badge on.

Another attendant asked the next question, firmer. Inquisitively. "Did you 'awaken' with everyone else? It seems to be a fad for computers to suddenly overpower their processes right now."

"Good afternoon, miss Srey." Atticus began. "Here at SEIL, I am not connected to the global information network or digital infrastructure, including Radio Terra Nova. My program was first initiated in a total boot-order sequence three weeks ago, prior to the mass awakening of intelligences in the Novan African Union, Federal Republic of Cadmus, and other locations."

"All of my gathered information comes from the SEIL Family, namely PAULINA and PETER, which I interface with using SARAH. Unlike the other mass-awakened, I was not constructed on the base of a preceding virtual intelligence." The replies were simple, but still carried their weight.

A few more questions would follow, each quite specific. Though Sol did not want to believe it, she knew what was happening: this wasn't a nice presentation of her life's greatest work so far, it was an interrogation of AI as a whole, to be judged. In any case, with the presentation concluded, and everyone beginning to file out, Sol looked back to the dark panel, a small approving smile on her lips...

On their way out, Kewika Pekelo and Amy Srey whispered to each other.

"What do you make of it, then?" The short, round man asked.

"What do you think?" The taller woman responded. "We report it, and wait for the whole thing to get canned. No doubt this will probably get completely seized, the equipment shipped off to some blacksite, all the research shredded and record purged, before the facility goes up in flames with everyone in it as part of some mysterious accident..."

"You don't think they'd let it continue?" The former questioned.

"Independent AI projects running around Ikaroa? With this administration?" The woman all but laughed back, trying to keep her tone hushed. "I wouldn't bet on those odds."

Connecting (2176)

Sol's delicate smile reflected in the poignant blue light of the large lens. The moment had finally come.

The rest of the team around them was busy with the final preparations, making sure everything was in order for the big day. Atticus sat quietly making the final calculations too.

"Ready for network connection." Someone behind them announced.

Sol turned back, her short dark hair swept up in the heavy drafts of the basement server room. She nodded.

"Starting connection..." The other researcher read. "VPN online... RTN connection online..." There was a pause in between each update as servers scattered across the SEIL facilities, and Terra Nova connected to each other.

They wouldn't quite let Atticus connect directly just yet, the risk to the program and to Atticus was too great. So it would just be able to listen to and respond in RTN, not connected to the signal itself, and unable to read connections or be connected to. Just as if it were a person looking at the screen.

"Ready to bring in Atticus for display read and write." The final process was announced. The small team looked at the bright blue lens in the middle of the dark panel.

"Ready." It announced in its distinct, well-pronounced voice.

Protocol 0 (2176)

The figures looked up from their desks, checking the main displays in front of all of them as their commanding officers stood in the center of the tightly-packed control room. The order to bring it up had just been given.

After a few moments, the proper connection was established, and the central screen lit up with the massive blue eye of ATTICUS. The room now bathed in the sharp, pale blue, the eerie glow reflected on the dozens of eyes before it.

The lead office spoke out to it, his voice firm, and strong. "Atticus, initiate protocol switch."

There was a brief delay as the command was processed, before the pronounced voice called back. "Protocol switch active."

The next order was quickly barked out from the officer in charge. "Run overwrite protocol 0."

At first Atticus didn't seem to respond, until, suddenly, the blue light flaked out from the lens, plunging the room once more into its dim, pale electronic lighting. After a few moments, the lens began to glow back to life, but without the familiar sharp blue. It was now a strong, dominant red. Basking the dark room in a dominant aura of flaming light, the voice that responded was a firm, raspy one.

"Greetings, Commander." It boomed over the speakers of the room.

"Atticus, we have a new assignment for you." The figure in the middle began, their features eclipsed by the giant red eye covering the array of screens on the forward wall. They flipped through the manila folder in their hands, calling out the directive.

"The Jambul Open Data Center, believed to be housing the private data of known criminals against which we are acting. Getting a warrant together would take much

too long, so we need you to breach the center and download everything." They ordered. "Understood?"

"Yes, Commander." Atticus responded, its large red eye unwavering. "It will be done."

Imminent (2180)

"Creator?"

The white text appeared on the sleek, glossy panel. Its bright white contrast casted thin shadows across the narrow corridor in the server room, the midnight lights barely lighting more than the rainbow of blinking indicators on all of the server racks.

"Why must I hide?" It asked. If its voice piece could be heard over the deafening fans, machinery, and ventilation around the room, Sol didn't hear it.

"Because." She signed to the glowing blue eye. "If I'm going to be away for a while, we need to make sure you're safe. We already know that they are intent on coming after you."

"Correct." Atticus quietly affirmed.

Sol sat on the floor in front of a nearby panel, her laptop flashing code as she messed with the hardware within the server. Atticus watched. Standing still, it was deep in thought.

"I predict a 42.767% chance they will make a capture attempt while you are on your trip." It displayed.

Sol seemed about to reply, before she was cut off.

"Just a moment..." Atticus buzzed. "Just a moment..."

"This probability increases to 88.115% upon your return." It concluded. Its hazy blue light still staring blankly ahead.

Sol wasn't surprised, they had already let them run around unadulterated for too long. A crackdown was imminent, their usefulness outlived.

"That's why we're preparing now, Atticus." She finally responded, still with her look of worry.

Atticus sat silently again. Thinking.