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Nakai Masakazu's Theory of Technology as Mediation and its Echoes in the Kyoto School

This paper aims to explore the significance of Nakai Masakazu's philosophy of technology within the context of the Kyoto School. While Nishida Kitarō and Miki Kiyoshi are typically regarded as the central figures in the Kyoto School to have developed a theory of technology, locating the essence of technology in the productive activity of *poiesis*, Nakai also developed a theory of technology, situating technology instead in the intermediary zone between the active process of formation and the passive act; in other words, the core of Nakai's philosophy of technology lies in his theory of mediation. What characterizes Nakai's approach is that he not only deepens this notion of mediation through an aesthetic lens but also applies it to the domain of the collective, such as collective arts like film or group-based practices like sports. This paper seeks to clarify how the theory of technology as mediation is concretely developed in Nakai's thought.

KEYWORDS: Nakai Masakazu—Kyoto School—Nishida—Miki— technology—mediation—function—aesthetics—projection

Technology has long been regarded as one of the central issues of contemporary society. With the recent rapid development of artificial intelligence, the urgency of this issue has intensified at an accelerated pace. Not only have the ethical concerns regarding the use of technology gained prominence, but there is also a growing demand for a philosophy of technology that clarifies the very essence of technology. Various figures have undertaken philosophical accounts of technology, most notably Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt. However, increasing attention has also been directed toward the treatment of technology in the Kyoto School.[1] Already in the early 1930s, the philosophers of the Kyoto School had taken up the question of technology as a major philosophical problem, and their insights into technology should be acknowledged for their remarkable foresight.

Among the principal figures involved in these discussions in prewar Japan were Nishida Kitarō, Miki Kiyoshi, Tosaka Jun, and Nakai Masakazu, who had developed an original aesthetic theory during the 1920s and 1930s. This paper examines Nakai's philosophy of technology as mediation and its relation to the Kyoto School.

Although Nakai's innovative work, particularly exemplified by "The Logic of the Committee" (1936), has been highly praised by Tsurumi Shunsuke,[2] it has not attracted significant attention in Kyoto School studies, which have focused primarily on Nishida, from whom Nakai maintained a critical distance. Research on Nakai has been more actively pursued within

1. For example, the philosophy of technology in the Kyoto School is discussed in the "Supplementary Essay" of Murata Jun'ichi's *Philosophy of Technology* (MURATA 2023), which offers a comprehensive treatment of technology from ancient Greece to the present.

2. TSURUMI 1962.

the context of media theory.[3] However, the central issue in that context—namely, whether Nakai's idea of mediation is best understood in terms of *Medium* or *Mittel*—cannot be fully understood without considering the debate between Nishida and Tanabe over the nature of absolute nothingness and the mode of mediation within it. While this paper aims to clarify Nakai's theory of technology, its true meaning appears to be grasped only when situated within the broader context of the Kyoto School.

The philosophy of technology in the kyoto school

Before examining Nakai's understanding of technology, we need to review the basic historical development of the problem of technology in the Kyoto School.

In the early 1930s, Tosaka published "On Technology," which begins by stating: "It does not necessarily appear that the question of technology constitutes a serious issue in the current intellectual climate of our country."[4] The philosophical engagement with technology in Japan is said to have begun in 1932 with discussions held in the "Society for Materialist Studies 「唯物論研究会」."[5] Tosaka's essay, which sought to clarify the essence of technology, had sparked what would come to be known as the "debate on technology." This debate unfolded within the framework and constraints of Marxism, as it was understood in Japan during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Tosaka's main argument was that the essence of technology was to be found in its social mode of existence as tools and machinery, such as the means of production within capitalist society. What was distinctive about his position was its emphasis not only on "material technology" in the strict sense, but also on the subjective aspects of technology, which refers broadly to "skills or abilities"[6] and includes the proficiency of skilled engineers and performers. Tosaka's discussion framed such subjective aspects in terms of

3. For detailed discussions on the reception history of Nakai's philosophy in this context, see Gotō, 2005, 2016, and 2018.

4. Tosaka 1966, 232.

5. Nakamura 1975, 4.

6. Tosaka 1966, 236.

forms of "higher intelligence" or "intelligence in the proper sense," rather than as issues of the body.

Nishida began to explore technology around the same time. In *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy, 1: The World of Action* (1933) and *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy, 2: The Dialectical World* (1934), Nishida sought to clarify the logical structure of the real world, emphasizing the self as an active agent that drives the world through its creative engagement. In this context, action was understood in terms of *poiesis*; that is, the actual use of tools to create something in the external world. For Nishida, the external object involved here was not merely a material thing, but something expressive that incites further action on our part.[7] We cannot enter into the details of Nishida's theory of technology here. However, for the sake of our consideration of Nakai's thought, it is important to note that Nishida understood technology not simply in terms of individual self-cultivation but as a form of *poiesis* possessing a social and historical formative power.[8]

This line of thought had a decisive influence on Miki. Miki developed his philosophical reflections on technology in several works: most importantly, in Chapter 3, "Technology," in *The Logic of Imagination* (1939) and *Philosophy of Technology* (1941). For Miki, the essence of technology also lies in *poiesis*.[9] As in the case of Nishida, Tosaka's distinction between the subjective and objective aspects of technology is no longer maintained by Miki. Miki considered all things produced through technological activity to be forms (形). "A fundamental concept common to all technology is the concept of form. Everything that is created by technology possesses form, and technological activity itself also possesses form."[10] While the concept of "form" is prominent in Nishida, Miki sought to give it concrete meaning by relating it to the issue of institutions (制度). His original contribution thus lies in rooting the production of form in the power of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*, 構想力).

The relationship between imagination and technology, both of which are form-generating, raises the complex question: namely, which of the two is

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7. See NKZ 7: 341.

8. See NKZ 9: 241.

9. See MKZ 7: 209–10.

10. MKZ 8: 227.

more fundamental? In *The Logic of Imagination,* the imagination appears to be subsumed under a broader concept of technology. This is evident in passages such as: "All living beings exist within an environment, and through their technical adaptation to this environment, they produce form."[11] The production of form through technology is extended here to the level of biological life, such that even the most *pathos*-laden or irrational aspect of the imagination remains situated within the domain of the technical adaptation of human life to its historical conditions.

Two points need to be emphasized. First, the idea that form is produced through the technical adaptation of life to its environment serves as the foundation for Miki's attempt to unify natural history and human history as processes of transformation (形の変化) and this idea is linked explicitly to Kant's discussion of the "technique of nature (*Technik der Natur*)." Second, technological activity possesses form; "form" refers to the objects produced and the structure of the action itself. In this sense, technology refers to the emergence of new modes of behavior through which life adapts to its environment. On the individual level, such behavior appears as a habit; on the social level, it takes the form of institutions that guide individuals toward modes of action.

Kant's "technique of nature" and the problem of aesthetic disinterest

Having briefly surveyed the central elements of the philosophy of technology in the Kyoto School, we can now consider the relation of Nakai's reflections on technology to these debates.

Nakai's interest in technology predates the 1930s, and his engagement with technology was not initially shaped by Marxism. Nakai studied aesthetics under Fukada Yasukazu and wrote his graduation thesis on Kant's *Critique of Judgment.* His first academic publication, "On Kant's 'First Draft' of the Preface to the Third Critique," appeared in July 1927 and focused on Kant's first Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment.* The version known to readers was an abridged version edited by one of Kant's students,

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11. MKZ 8: 236.

Jakob Sigismund Beck. The full original manuscript was only published in the Cassirer edition of Kant's *Collected Works*.

In his essay, Nakai emphasized that the Beck version omitted key passages on "technique" and the "technique of nature (*Technik der Natur*)," thereby "causing the concept of technique to lose its systematic function as a mediating category between the theoretical and the practical realms."[12] For Kant, the technique of nature does not refer to the objective mechanical structure of nature, but rather to its being subjectively purposive, as judged by reflective judgment. Although considering the implications of this for the systematic unity of Kant's three Critiques exceeds the scope of this paper, the idea that technology mediates between theory and practice is a central and recurring theme in Nakai's philosophy.

In modern terminology, technique and technology are distinguished: the former refers to bodily skills or artisanal practices, while the latter indicates the socially organized manipulation of nature based on scientific knowledge. In the Kyoto School, technique and technology are viewed as united in productive action mediated by tools. Even in Tosaka's Marxist framework, where only the latter counts as true technology, the subjective side is acknowledged as significant. Nakai appears to have remained within the former understanding in his early studies of Kant. However, as his thought developed in the 1930s, his concept of technology broadened to include the latter. A decisive influence in this development was his reading of Ernst Cassirer's 1910 work, *Substance and Function* (*Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*). Nakai elaborates on this in his essay "The Contribution of the Concept of Function to Aesthetics" (1930).

The philosophers of the Kyoto School shared a common orientation toward dismantling the traditional concept of substance and the logic grounded on it. For Nishida, it was "place," and for Tanabe, it was "mediation," which served as the basis for overcoming Western modes of thought and logic. In Nakai's case, it was "function" (*Funktion*). Nakai frequently employed examples such as windows or warships to explain the inadequacy of the concept of substance in grasping reality. In traditional epistemology, the concept of a "window" is formed by extracting the common properties from countless individual windows. While such repeated abstraction

12. NMZ 1: 282.

increases the conceptual universality, it ultimately leads to the conclusion that the concept bears no actual correspondence to real windows: "it is that vague general representation which is called a window."[13] By contrast, a window understood in terms of a function is "a structured composite of three elements: lighting, ventilation, and visibility."[14] Depending on the relative weight of each of these elements, various types of windows are produced. Because this way of thinking does not rely on mental images formed in memory, one avoids the paradox—produced by substance-concepts and a representational mode of thinking—that people confronted with modern warships vastly different from those of their own would be unable to derive the concept of "warship" from their mental image. Essential to the function-concept is how each element performs its role in relation to the whole. In functional logic, equivalence does not mean quantitative identity, but rather "positional equivalence, that is, a relational correspondence of one element in a set to another element in another set."[15]

What deserves attention when applying this line of thought to the field of aesthetics is its conception of function as something that is not subordinate to purposiveness. Nakai distinguishes "taking measures toward an end (*le raisonnement*)" and "feeling the end itself (*le sentiment*)."[16] For Nakai, when an element is functioning well within some kind of overall order, it is "truly and deeply disinterested"[17]; that is, it carries the meaning of "an aesthetic attitude as 'interest without interest,'"[18] in the sense that it is liberated from the dimension of concern that demands the fulfillment of an end. Nakai states:

> Here arises a different way of viewing the idea of purpose: that is, a way of seeing through the purpose as a great order, a profound complex that includes even the desire itself as one of its internal elements, having cast off the psychological view that regards purpose merely as desire. This also signifies the will's inclination toward a more concrete universality.[19]

13. NMZ 1: 174.
14. Ibid.
15. NMZ 1: 172.
16. NMZ 1: 182.
17. NMZ 1: 183.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.

Nakai distinguishes between "internal technology" and "external technology." The former refers to that "which is related to the technology of bodily composition, such as breath, *iki* (イキ), and *kotsu* (コツ) in artistic creation and performance." The latter refers to that "which is related to the technology of social composition, such as collective structural beauty, or the beauty of character."[20] Thus, the foundational framework of Nakai's aesthetics is inseparable from his understanding of technology.

The development of technical beauty

This mode of aesthetic sensibility, grounded in the concept of function, is developed by Nakai as what he calls "technical beauty (技術美)." This idea is addressed, particularly with attention to the body, in his essay "The Contribution of the Concept of Function to Aesthetics." Invoking Kant's notion of the "technique of nature,"[21] Nakai argues here that the meaning of "nature" in this context should be expanded so as "to include the 'human bodily constitution': in other words, its inner nature." He continues as follows:

> This gives us reason to think that Kant, in his overly Protestant fashion, had too readily cast aside the organic sense, and that there might have been room for a lawful reconsideration of it. For the muscle, by evaluating its own activity through the nerves within itself and grasping, through direct reflection, the deep lawful regularity it finds there: that is, where we should locate a truly pure intuition of the "technique of nature." In all arts, in what is called "technique" or "skill," the internal structure of the "arm" must always be grounded in a deep trust in this inner "technique of nature," namely, the refinement of muscular operation.[22]

And it is upon this very basis, the refinement of muscular operation that gives rise to technical beauty, that Nakai developed his original project of exploring the philosophical or aesthetic meaning of sports. As someone who

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20. Ibid.

21. In "On the 'First Draft' of the Preface to Kant's Third Critique," "*der Technik der Natur*" was translated as 「自然の技巧」, literally, the skill, artistry, technique of nature; whereas in the present text it appears as 「自然の技術」, literally, the technology of nature.

22. NMZ 1: 196.

loved rowing, Nakai regarded "the purest form of technical beauty as existing in the world of sports."[23]

In his 1931 essay, "An Anthropological Inquiry into Art," Nakai offers a clearer definition of this notion. According to him, natural beauty (自然美) and artistic beauty (芸術美) correspond to two directions: "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) and "projection" (*Entwerfen*). Technical beauty, by contrast, arises in "the interactive middle ground between these two directions."[24] In other words, technical beauty emerges in the convergence of sensing and doing, in hearing and singing, in listening and speaking.

Here, Nakai also articulates the core of his theory of technology. For him, technology is not merely the act of producing objects through tools, as Nishida or Miki seem to have argued; it also involves constantly adjusting one's relation to the world, a repositioning of the self that encompasses both doing and undergoing. He writes:

> It is in the realm of this technical beauty that humans immerse themselves fully in art. The meaning of technique lies in self-regulation in creation, the effort to harmonize human functions that seek to permeate natural functions, the training of perfect mastery over one's own human functions, and the overcoming of natural functions to achieve ideal human unity. Human functions encompass everything from the physiological body to psychological adjustment, social training, and physical machinery.[25]

This structure is articulated even more clearly in his 1932 essay "Art under the Crisis of Thought and Its Tendencies." Nakai correlates here the individual dimensions of thrownness and projection with memory and imagination, and the collective dimensions with record (記録) and planning (企画). Technology is the element that links the individual and the collective, mediating between thrownness and projection at both levels. Individual self-regulation corresponds to "the mind-body complex" (心身); and collective regulation corresponds to machines, organizations, and control (統制).

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23. NMZ 2: 293. A detailed discussion of Nakai's theory of sports cannot be undertaken here, but the fact that he focuses on the problem of form in sports is noteworthy in relation to Miki's theory of imagination. This is because the patterns of human action typified in athletic form seem to offer a good example of what Miki calls form.

24. NMZ 2: 7.

25. NMZ 2: 7.

What Nakai emphasizes, and what distinguishes his position, is precisely the collective form of technology in this context. Even when he regards sports as the quintessential example of "technical beauty," what he primarily has in mind are team-based sports or group competitions. For Nakai, the emergence of the collective is a thoroughly modern phenomenon. In his view, even the problem of the subject (*Subjekt*), one of the central themes running through modern Western philosophy, has entered a new stage as the subject within the collective.

Nakai discovers hope in the mechanization and collectivization inherent in technology because he sees in them the potential to fundamentally overturn the modern conception of art, which is centered on "genius, creativity, and beauty," a conception which can all too easily lapse into "self-indulgence, individualism, and inauthenticity." And this hope is not merely an ideal yet to be realized; it is already taking place in the form of the "collective organization of art" in film.[26] Of course, Nakai was cognizant that the art produced in this context is driven by the pursuit of profit. Nevertheless, he speaks directly to those who disdain such an emerging art form:

> A segment of the intellectual class, out of fear of modern beauty, often points to machines, jazz, and talkies as examples of this danger. And they lament these phenomena as if they were nothing but an inevitable nuisance. However, beneath such lamentation lies a subtle and cruel disregard for humanity, one they will never become aware of for all eternity. They are "lonely people" who not only mistake mechanisms for the masses but turn their backs on love itself.[27]

What, then, is the nature of the beauty underlying this collective, organized art? According to Nakai, it is the "aesthetic sense of beauty of organization (組織感の美感),"[28] the pleasure that arises when one's actions within a group harmonize precisely with the functioning of the whole. This represents "the emergence of a new inner sensibility."[29] This idea builds upon Nakai's earlier concept of function. "Just as a well-coordinated muscle brings joy to the individual, the structural harmony of a social organization

26. NMZ 2: 50.
27. NMZ 2: 78.
28. NMZ 2: 56.
29. NMZ 2: 56.

[構造] can offer a similar joy to the collective."[30] It is easy to read the danger of totalitarianism into this vision. And yet, where he understands "the sense of organization" as "a sense of camaraderie found at the limits of a life lived through to the fullest,"[31] his words surely capture something of the lived reality of modern individuals who do not feel only suffering or sorrow in being part of an organization, but also the joy and aesthetic feeling of pleasure that arises from being part of an organization.

THE SHIFT IN NAKAI'S UNDERSTANDING OF TECHNOLOGY AND THE THEORY OF PROJECTION

The theoretical foundation of Nakai's understanding is his appropriation of the concept of function, drawn from Cassirer. To put it simply, functionalist thinking defines the elements of a system in terms of their relational roles within a whole. How then is the philosophical significance of the whole to be understood in Nakai's thought? In a paper included in *Hegel's Philosophy and Dialectic* (1932), Tanabe argues prior to Nakai that the universal, taken as the object of reflective judgment, should be understood as an open totality that changes in accordance with the movement of its parts, and that, insofar as it remains something merely to be sought, it is to be conceived of as "nothingness."[32] Nakai seems to have been somewhat restrained in entrusting this problem to the conceptual device of "nothingness." While he does not appear to have directly examined the nature of such an open totality, what he does explore, closely tied to the dynamic relationship between part and whole, is one of the theoretical pillars of his philosophy: namely, his theory of projection (射影).

Nakai's theory of projection is most fully articulated in his short 1934 draft of an essay entitled "The Relevance of the Copy Theory (模写論) to Aesthetics." Before clarifying this theory, an issue of decisive importance for understanding Nakai's philosophy of technology must be addressed. Around this time, a shift appears to have occurred in Nakai's understand-

30. NMZ 2: 57.
31. NMZ 2: 79.
32. See TAKEHANA 2012 and 2020.

ing of technology toward production.[33] In this essay, Nakai now describes technology in Marxist terminology. Nakai writes, for example: "In general, the question of technology is considered as a productive system related to the active elements of human productive power; that is, labor power and the means of labor."[34] Likewise, in "The Logic of the Committee," the logic of technology is introduced from the standpoint of the relation between labor power and the means of labor. This shift appears to have taken place at the same time that Tosaka, a member of the so-called left wing of the Kyoto School, began to address the nature of production or the creative theory of technology. It is possible that Nakai was drawn into the magnetic field of those discussions. This does not mean, however, that technology for Nakai is entirely reducible to the problem of production, as is evident in "The Logic of the Committee," where Nakai proposes "a logic of production" separate from "the logic of technology." What, then, does Nakai's theory of technology, shaped by its approach to the issue of production, signify? To answer this question, let us first clarify the nature of Nakai's theory of projection.

Projection refers to the way one thing is reflected or projected by another. It describes a relationship in which some entity, including consciousness, is "copied" (模写, *Abbild*) by another entity. This relation of "projecting and being projected," or copy, is to be understood not only in terms of consciousness but in terms of the logic of function relations. What is at issue here is not how faithfully the reproduced form of a thing is, as would be discussed in the context of representation, but rather how something functions as a constituent element within a larger structure directed toward a specific purpose. It refers to the way in which a part exists in a relation of correspondence with the whole.

According to Nakai, projection takes on three forms: "direct projection (reflex)" (直接射影 [反射]), "upper projection (reflection)" (上部射影 [反映]), and "fundamental projection (copy)" (基礎射影[模写]).[35] The first type of projection is a "direct action" or "reflex movement" that occurs

33. It has been pointed out that Nakai's evaluation of the concept of function began to shift around the time he wrote "The Logic of the Committee" (Monbe 2024, 31–2), and this change may not have been unrelated to the shift in his understanding of the concept of technology.

34. NMZ 1: 15.

35. NMZ 1: 14.

without the intervention of reflective activity.[36] This form of projection is not central to Nakai's overall discussion. What is important is the relationship between the second and third forms of projection. With regard to the third type, fundamental projection or "orthographic projection" (正射影), Nakai writes:

> This [fundamental projection] is an ultimate potential state in which one projects and grasps one's own situation in a depth that cognition cannot reach; it is the limit of possible projections of the entire world series held by what is called the projecting mechanism of consciousness.[37]

In other words, it refers to a state in which something corresponds to and functions properly within a completely formed totality, where it is, in that sense, correctly projected by the whole. As Nakai puts it elsewhere: "To run without distortion—in other words, to fall into the correct form of running—is to attain the orthographic projection of that running style."[38] Orthographic projection, then, is the condition of being placed in the most appropriate functional position, but since this is only possible within a fully realized totality, it must be understood as an ideal, limit state. By contrast, the second form, upper projection, is the form of projection that appears "distorted" when compared to the hypothetically assumed structure of orthographic projection. However, it is precisely this upper projection, in some distorted state, that characterizes our actual condition. As Nakai notes:

> From crude naïveté to the refined precision of the laboratory, all recognition, to a greater or lesser extent, stands in the second position, and it is extremely difficult for recognition to ever attain fully correct and comprehensive projection in response to the refined and shifting circumstances of the time.[39]

He then adds: "The cognitive aspect of the copy theory lies in how position two can be liberated from its shackles and approach position three."[40]

36. Ibid.
37. NMZ 1: 14.
38. NMZ 1: 11.
39. NMZ 1: 14.
40. NMZ 1: 15.

Technology as a self-negating mediation

Building upon the theory of projection elaborated above, we now turn to examine how Nakai conceptualizes technology in "The Relevance of the Copy Theory to Aesthetics" and "The Logic of the Committee," particularly in terms of how he treats the issue of production. This will help clarify Nakai's understanding of the relation between technology and creative production.

Nakai characterizes technology in "The Logic of the Committee" as follows:

> The fall of water is a natural sequential order. It is a natural principle of causality. For the sequential order of this fall to be transformed into a human sequential order, that is, transformed into the motion of an electric machine, an infinite sequential conversion is required; strictly speaking, *there is a combining of elements of the natural sequential elements with human sequential elements that marks the genesis of the new order of necessity of natural progression and the technical object*.[41]

For Nakai, human purpose creates new orders through the manipulation of natural sequences, resulting in technological objects. However, this does not define the essence of technology itself. Technology resides at the point of connection, the mediation between natural and human sequences. Nevertheless, insofar as this mediation brings about new orders, it may also be considered a form of creation. Nakai characterizes moments in which reality and unreality are transformed through technology as instances of "technical time" (技術的時間), as contrasted with moments in "natural time" (自然的時間). These are marked by what he calls "primordial productive presentness" (原生産的時間性).

Such "primordial productive" moments are "distortions brought about by human purposive action."[42] Technology constantly "bends the order of nature,"[43] interfering with its course. As a result, when something is brought into being or negated through technological intervention, it becomes increasingly likely to deviate from the mode of fundamental projection.

41. nmz 1: 85; Nakai 2024, 333.
42. nmz 1: 16.
43. nmz 1: 17.

Technology causes "human beings' original desires to be wounded and distorted, to the point where even the fundamental projection of human action, what it is that one truly desires, becomes obscured."[44] In "The Logic of the Committee," these aspects are treated separately under what Nakai calls the "logic of production," which expresses the "self-alienating aspect" of technology.

However, the fact that technology brings about "distortion" must at the same time be understood as the "emergence of a new necessary order." Thus, the functional value and position of what exists should be determined within this newly generated order, and what is called a "distortion" must be defined in terms of this newly emerged framework. In short, fundamental projection, or orthographic projection, can only be achieved within the "primordial productive presentness" of technology. Nakai's theory of projection is thus grounded in a theory of time. Earlier, we encountered his remark that "to fall into the correct form of running is to attain the orthographic projection of that running style," this sense of "falling into place" is discussed further in his essay "The Structure of Rhythm" (1932); where it is developed in terms of the concept of *ma* (間); that is, the momentary interval that structures rhythm itself.

If we think along these lines, then the possible nature of the functionalist concept of totality in Nakai's thought begins to take shape, albeit faintly. For Nakai, fundamental projection had previously been referred to as an ideal limit state: a condition in which one is projected in relation to the entirety of the cosmos. But it becomes increasingly clear that such a totality can no longer be considered fixed. This is because, insofar as technology constantly brings forth new orders, the very structure that determines whether something is seen as "fitting into place" must itself be understood as changing along with it. Nakai frequently invoked the example of the "navigable balloon." Once a fictitious and unrealistic concept, it became a reality through the advent of the Zeppelin airship.[45] If we are allowed to extend this example, it would not be inappropriate to say that technology alters the things judged to function well and the very framework by which such judgments are made.

44. NMZ 1: 17.
45. NMZ 1: 16.

However, Nakai's texts do not clearly articulate such a concept of a "moving" fundamental projection. Even so, it is unmistakably the case that the part, as it corresponds to the totality, is understood in terms of a dynamic structural relation. It is precisely here that Nakai's conception of technology as mediation resides.

Nakai understands the mode of existence brought about by technology as something experimental: that is to say, something that is deemed to fit within a given order at one moment is, in the very next moment, subjected to new technological purposiveness, becoming a kind of touchstone, or, in some cases, a mere stepping stone, for the generation of a new order. At the foundation of the concept of function lies a "purposive fluidity, that is, convertibility." This ever-changing nature of technology is illustrated by way of the example of the warship, explaining that technological existence is something that "loses its very existence by existing, negates itself, and immediately becomes a medium to indicate its technological purpose"[46] and by which new technological purposes are indicated. The moment that something comes into existence, its reality is denied; it appears as a "distortion" in relation to the newly emergent order. However, as the system searches for ways in which that distortion might come to fit within this new framework, the signs of yet another new order begin to emerge. In this sense, for Nakai, technology is not merely a mediation between the natural order and the human order; it is a self-negating mediation, a form of mediation that, in mediating, negates itself.[47]

What is presented here is the forward-leaning character of technology, the tendency to produce a new one, one after another. Yet in his postwar essay "On the Problem of Mediation in Art" (1947), Nakai also expresses a view that resists being entirely subsumed by such dynamism. While he continues to define technology as a "dialectical concept of mediation" (弁証

46. NMZ 1: 90: NAKAI 2024, 337.

47. This article does not aim to directly address the question of whether Tanabe's concept of mediation should be understood as *Medium* or *Mittel*. In my view, it is not particularly productive to isolate this question as a self-standing issue. However, if one were to take *Medium* as Nishida's type of mediation and *Mittel* as Tanabe's type of mediation, then the form of mediation revealed through the problem of technology would appear to be highly compatible with the concept of mediation as the self-negating character of the species, as proposed by Tanabe in "The Socio-Ontological Structure of Logic" (1936).

法的媒介概念) between two orders, and understands it as a self-negating, unstable, and dynamic structure, he also recognizes that even what is trampled underfoot in the process of negation may itself possess value. He writes:

> The human action expressed through the word "purpose" does not merely signify a linear movement "toward a distant ideal." Rather, technological time, unlike such a concept which bears the remnants of a semi-natural, linearly flowing temporality, is characterized by a primordial productive presentness in which every moment—through the practice of "stepping firmly upon error" [謬りをふみしめて]—serves as a point of origin, wherein the infinite future and the infinite past may interact and converge recipro- cally and cyclically.[48]

Following this, Nakai insists that it is precisely in "stepping firmly upon error" that "the true meaning of the dignity of humanity" is to be found; by creating one's own actions anew from that very place.[49] How such an attitude toward the negative, as something that may bear its own intrinsic worth, should be situated within Nakai's broader philosophy of technology remains a matter for further inquiry. That question, however, must be left for another occasion.

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