

# Dürer and Sesshū as Spiritual History: Godness and Emptiness [1]

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## 1. The Necessity for and Significance of the Comparative Study of Sesshū and Dürer

Sesshū (1420-1505 or 1507) lived through the Ōnin War (1467-1477) in Japan, and Albrecht Dürer, (1471-1528) the German Renaissance. Sesshū was immersed in Buddhist thought and Dürer in Christian-philosophical thought. As men of periods of epochal change, both spent an important part of their lives wandering from land to land, country to country. Sesshū, for example, after he had finished his training in Zen practice in Kyoto and lived for a short time in Yamaguchi prefecture, went to China in 1467 as a member of the Japanese delegation to the Ming dynasty, staying there for two years. After his return to Japan, he travelled to Tsukushi and Oita, both on Kyushu. Finally, he went back to Yamaguchi, where he founded his studio Tenkai (the studio of the painting heaven-wide opened). But he continued to make trips to various places where he produced many masterpieces. Dürer wandered at the age of 19 for his artisan training. He visited the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Italy, and Austria, and produced many works. After he returned to Nürnberg, he made many further small trips, which resulted in numerous works.

Sesshū practiced Zen in Shōkokuji temple in Kyoto, where the well known monk-painter Shūbun (?-mid. 15 c.) was working. Sesshū held him, together with another monk-painter Josetsu (14-15 c.), in high respect as teacher and master. It will not be necessary to stress that Kyoto was the capital of Japan and the center not only of politics, but also of religion and art. It was no wonder that the painting of Sesshū was based on the spirit of Zen. Nürnberg, on the other hand, where Dürer was born and grew up, was called the hidden capital of the Holy Roman Empire, and was an important center of commerce, humanism, religion, and art. Because of the two cathedrals, many artists and craftsmen gathered there to engage in the restoration and the production of paintings as well as ornaments for the religious buildings. In the midst of the religious atmosphere, Dürer came to express the spirit of Christianity. The comparative reflection on these two painters will concentrate on the artistic expression of the human being and nature. The world of Dürer will be characterized with the word “godness” and that of Sesshū with the word of “nothingness” or “emptiness” in the Zen Buddhist sense. The former will be interpreted with the help of European philosophy.

## 2. “Human being” and “Nature” in Dürer

No objection will be raised against the thesis that with regard to Dürer, the portrait is quantitatively as well as qualitatively superior to landscape painting. Because of the limited



Fig.1: The tree at a stone quarry

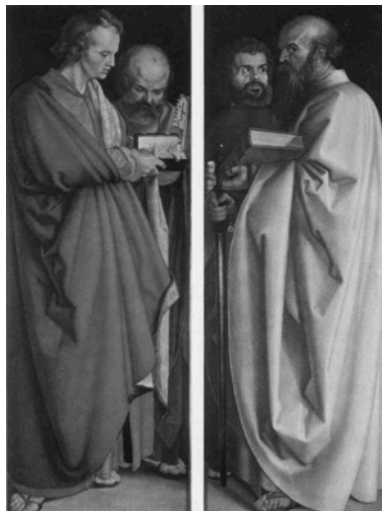


Fig.2: Four apostles



Fig.3: Adam and Eve

space, only representative works can be shown here. First, “*The tree at a stone quarry*” (Figure 1), which will be compared later with a work of Sesshū. In Dürer’s time, it was not self-evident that the landscape might become the subject of painting; hence, we see in this work the forefront of the sensitivity for the nature. But we must hesitate to evaluate the work as surpassing modern landscape painting, such as that of Cézanne. Let us turn our eyes to the portrait painting in “*Four Apostles*” (Figure 2) and “*Adam and Eve*” (Figure 3), where we find that the depicted figures express not only the iconographic characters at an excellent level artistically, but also their inner spirituality.

Let us consider “*Four Apostles*” (Figure 2). All the names of these figures are given in the inscription below of the picture, but can also be identified on iconographic grounds. The man in the foreground left holding the Bible in his hand can be identified as John. His Gospel begins, as is well known, with the words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The figure in the background holding a key in the hand is Peter, as is described in the Gospel of *Matthew*, 16: 19: “I (Jesus) will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” They are absorbed in the Gospel, John with his intellectuality and Peter, although he was an uneducated fisherman, with the eye of faith. The folds of John’s robes forms elegant arcs converging on the right arm, with which the Bible is held. The persons at his right are Mark and Paul, as is indicated in the inscription below. But the inscription does not identify which figure is Mark and which Paul. The man in the foreground right seems at first to be Mark, because he seems to hold a long staff in the right hand. In *Mark’s Gospel* 6: 8, it is stated: “and he (Jesus) charged them (the twelve disciples) that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only.” Many guidebooks identify him as Mark.[2] But when we look more attentively at the picture, we find it is not a staff that the figure holds but a sword. In that case, we must recall the phrase of *Paul’s letter to the Ephesians* 6: 17: “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.” The shield mentioned in 6: 16 of the same letter is also partially visible under the man’s robes. This “armor of God” which Peter recommended to the Ephesians for “wrestling against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness



Fig.4: Duerers self-portrait



Fig.6: Duerers self-portrait



Fig.5: Duerers self-portrait

in the heavenly places” (ibid., 16: 12), shows that the person is Paul, as is maintained in other guidebooks.[3] Thus, the person in the background right must be Mark. His face, like that of Paul, is no longer directed into the testament, but outward. For, his mind is directed to the mission among the folk, as is suggested in *Mark* 16: 15: “And he (Jesus) said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” Both Mark and Paul dedicated themselves to the mission. The folds of Paul’s robes, which form more dynamic arc lines than that of John, look as if they spring and flow out of the closed Holy Bible held in Paul’s hand.

Another pair of persons, Adam and Eve, is also depicted according to the *Old Testament* (Figure 3). Adam, who was tempted by Eve, shows a kind of hesitation and shyness, while Eve is totally self-confident. Her confidence is expressed in her alluring pose. Other painters have tried to copy this work, but no one has succeeded in imitating the sublime beauty of Eve as depicted by Dürer. The atmosphere of these two nudes expresses a kind of divine atmosphere rather than a mere eroticism, as in the case of many nude paintings of the modern age.

In order to sound out the inner spiritual state of Dürer, let us look at a series of his self-portraits. The first one is a self-portrait that he painted at the age of 13 (Figure 4). On the canvas is written in New High German: “I have made it from a mirror. In the year 1484 when I was still a child. Albrecht Dürer.” (Dz hab ich awß ein spigell nach mir selb kunterfet Im 1484 Jar do ich noch ein kint was. Albrecht Dürer). In the history of art, it was unusual at that time for a painter to paint his self-portrait on the basis of his figure in a mirror. In this work, one can therefore find a precocious self-consciousness in Dürer, but the important point for us is that his self-consciousness is different from that of the modern age. Note that he makes a devout gesture of worship, looking upward. This attitude is more clearly to be seen in his self-portrait painted ten years later, in 1494 (Figure 5). There is an inscription in New High German: “My matter is so, as is decided on high (My sach die gat / Als es oben schtat)”. The self-consciousness of Dürer tells us that his own self is determined by heaven and not by himself. He is conscious that his selfhood is covered with Godness, and this dual



Fig.7: Duerers self-portrait

consciousness may be regarded as one of the characteristics of consciousness during the Renaissance. The self in which Godness is concealed must have divine grace, and just this is stressed in the self-portrait of 1498 (Figure 6). Dürer produced this work when he was 27 years old, though in the inscription on the canvas he depicts: “I painted it 1498. I was twenty six years old. Albrecht Dürer.” Monogram (Das malt Ich nach meiner gestalt/ Ich was sex vnd zwanzig jor alt/ |Albrecht Dürer/Monogramm).

One of the most important and representative works which expresses the inner spirituality of Dürer is his self-portrait when he was 30 years old (Figure 7). It is said that this work intends the expression of the imitation of Jesus. The inscription reads: “Albertus Dürer, the man of Noricus. I have painted myself in my own colors in this way in my 28th year.” (Albertus Durenus Noricus / ipsum me propriis sic effin/ gebam coloribus aetatis / anno XXVIII). His eyes look straight ahead, but not into ours. The pupils have a gleam, which looks at no object. One can say that they present the inner sphere of the Godness of the painter, and draw us into this sphere. It should be remembered that the way of life called the “imitatio Christi,” begun by Francis of Assisi, was philosophically developed by Thomas á Kempis (1380-1471) in his writing “*De imitatio Christi*”, and spread above all among the monastic order of Francis. Dürer, who was born the year in which Thomas á Kempis died, must have been familiar with the thought of the imitation of Christ. Just in this historical context it is also understandable that the figure of Dürer is depicted in the proportion of the golden section, as has been pointed out by specialists [4], the proportion which is often adopted for depicting divine figures.

For our understanding of this self-portrait in the context of western philosophical thinking, one thing should be pointed out first. The self-portrait has two aspects: the figure of Christ and that of Dürer. It has two centers, Christ and Dürer. Both must overlap each other, but just because of this overlapping, the portrait indicates also the possibility that it differs from the real image of Dürer, and accordingly, the possibility of the split between human being and divine being.

For a deeper understanding of the spiritual meaning of this possibility, it will be helpful to quote the philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling. In his treatise on the essence of the human freedom, Schelling found the essential character of human freedom in the capacity for committing evil. It was the same problem as the question, why there is evil in the world, which was created by the sublime being, God. Schelling’s solution is that the reason for the existence of evil must be in God, but have a root which is independent of God.[5] The reason lies in “the nature in God,” which is the “ground of the existence of God, but not God, so far as he exists.” The nature in God is like dark gravity in comparison with light. This dark nature is not separable from God, but is distinguished from God. These two principles—on the one hand, the blind and egoistic will of the human being as creature, and on the other, the universal will of light—can split apart, so that the principle of the darkness takes the upper hand over the

light. Then “the possibility of good and evil” becomes real.[6] Only the human being has these two principle in himself, “the deepest abyss and the highest heaven, or two centers.”[7]

Dürer, who lived three centuries before Schelling, was of course not conscious of this possibility. But his self-portrait depicts two centers, Dürer and Christ, or, in the formulation of Schelling, “the being (das Wesen), so far as he exists” and “the being (das Wesen), so far as it is the ground for his existence.”[8] With Dürer who believed as Renaissance painter in God, the split did not take place. The human being remains similar to Christ without revolting against God. The human being, which possesses two centers, is superior to other creatures and therefore to the natural world. The spirit of the human being has superiority over the physical world, so that the painting of the human figure became a more important motif than the landscape or still life. This tendency continued until the beginning of the modern age, when art came to refuse obedience to religion and attempt to be “art for the sake of art,” *l’art pour l’art*. Dürer was a painter who built a fundamental pillar of this tradition before the modern age.

### 3. “Human Being” and “Nature” in Sesshū

Let us turn to Sesshū. We find in his paintings a tendency opposite to that of Dürer, that is, the superiority of the painting of the natural landscape – the so-called mountain-river painting – on that of the human figure. Let us look at a self-portrait painted when Sesshū was 71 years old (Figure 8). It has an inscription in which Sesshū identifies himself as the first monk in the Tendō temple in China under the Ming dynasty. We see that Sesshū thought of himself not as a mere “painter,” but as a “monk painter” who depicts his inner state of awakening. To what extent can this work be described as a masterpiece? It is undoubtedly great, but it is surely a question whether it is to be judged as superlative in comparison with Sesshū’s mountain-river paintings. Some of us will reserve judgment, asking themselves if the depicted figure adequately expresses what the inscribed poem states: “He sharply tells the truth that the flower as a phenomenon is empty (non-existent), having originally no form and not appearing.”



Fig.8: Sesshus self-portrait

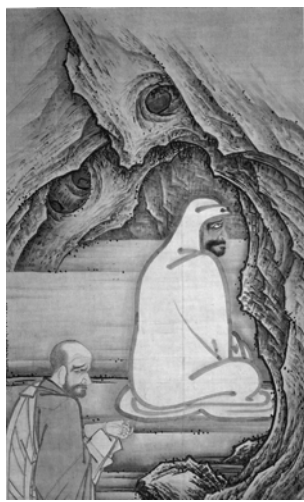


Fig.9: Eka cuts [off his arm at] the elbow

Although the portrait represents a mature and calm monk-painter, some critics will miss the inner sharpness and power praised in the inscribed poem. Might this deficiency be due to the advanced age of the 71 year old painter? But six years later, Sesshū accomplished his greatest masterpiece, “*Eka cuts [off his arm at] the elbow.*” (Figure 9). It is an excellent painting of human figures. As we will note later, however, not only the outer figure of the human beings, but their inner nature is depicted, expressed in the painting of mountain and river. The inner as well as the outer nature is the subject of the painting. To see this, it will be helpful to view some



Fig.10: Winter painting

representative mountain-river paintings.

Recalling Dürer's work "The tree at a stone quarry," let us consider Sesshū's work "Winter painting" (Figure 10), one of the pair of paintings entitled "Mountain-river in autumn and winter." The works of Dürer and Sesshū are similar in constitution in that the line in the middle stretches vertically upward. In the work of Dürer, this line is made by a tree, and in the work of Sesshū, the line of the mountain ridge is in the middle. It divides the picture into the right and left side. The left side is the winter mountain covered with the snow. The right side is a huge precipice, on which seemingly many trees are growing, though in reality these "trees" are typical "rock wrinkles," as is used in the traditional mountain-river painting to express the cubic effect.[9] But the thick, vertical line in the middle, vigorously stretching into the heaven, can not be understood on the ground of this traditional painting code, because such a line can not exist in such misty mountains where a haze is hanging. It is obviously the expression of the spirit of the monk-painter, as is written in a Zen poem: "Cutting both heads simultaneously, the sword stretches onto the heavens, glistening and cold." The outer constitution of both works, Dürer's and Sesshū's, is similar, but the spiritual atmosphere and tension are quite different. Dürer painted the landscape of the stone quarry surely with curiosity, but not with much attention to the divinity of nature, which he saw in the four apostles or in his own self-portrait.



Fig.11: Long Scroll of Mountains and Rivers (1)

In Sesshū's mountain-river painting, the external world is painted as the expression of the inner nature of the human being. This is clearly seen in the so-called 16 meter long "Long Scroll of Mountains and Rivers (part)" (Figure 11). The mountain to which a Taoist monk climbs is the place of his practice, and the depicted scenes in the mountain are the stages of his mind in practice. The main subject is "nature" and not the mere human being. The persons who appear in the mountain-river painting are always very small, while the mountains are high and steep.

But an objection could be raised here: How is it with the masterpiece mentioned before, "Eka cuts the elbow" (Figure 9). Is it not a picture of two human beings, Bodhidharma and Eka?

This scene is well known in the history of Zen Buddhism. Bodhidharma was practicing alone, always sitting in front of the wall. One day a man named Eka, who became later the second patriarch of Zen Buddhism, visited him requesting to become his disciple. Dharma did not allow at first Eka to become his disciple. At last Eka, who remained outside of the temple, cut off his arm at the elbow to show his resolve and the inner state of his mind. Why has Eka cut his elbow? The dialog between the two is delivered in a quite short form: The second patriarch Eka asked the master Bodhidharma, "My heart is not yet relieved. Please, Master, relieve my heart. Bodhidharma said to him, Bring your heart to me, then I will relieve it for you. Eka said, I have sought my heart, but the heart is nowhere to be grasped.

Bodhidharma said to him, I have relieved your heart for you”.[10]

The subject is the “heart,” which means, first, the mind, and in Buddhism, the Buddha-nature or the self of the human being. It is nowhere to be found or grasped, because it is in truth emptiness (*sunyata*). The work of Sesshū, in which this ungraspable heart should be depicted, is not quite original in its pictorial motif. There is a forerunner in China, the work of the leader of the Setsu-school, Taishin. But there is a decisive difference between the two. With Taishin, the cavern in the mountain offers a mere spatial place in which two masters are sitting, while with Sesshū the cavern is drawn in a way that is expressive of the inner spiritual state of the two masters. This should be shown by the structural analysis of the work.

Note at first that the line depicting the right half of the entrance of the cavern repeats the outline of the body of Bodhidharma sitting in front of the rock wall. The cavern and Bodhidharma are similar to each other, indicating that the cavern manifests the heart of Bodhidharma. When we look into the cavern, we see the steps, one above another, towards the inner recesses, but we cannot see the end. That the heart cannot be gained and is infinitely deep is expressed visually by the figure of the cavern. In the upper part of the entrance, there are two curious holes which seemingly were made by wind and rain. The right hole is located in a place lying along a line with the jaw and the eye of Bodhidharma. The right hole could therefore be understood as the visualized form of the mind’s eye, in Japanese-Chinese: *heart-eye*, of Bodhidharma. The left hole a little behind is located in the place under which the head of Eka is drawn. The outline built by the back of Eka and his head, on the one hand, and the line of the wall along with the left hole, on the other hand, are, as in the case of Bodhidharma, parallel to each other. The left hole may thus be understood as the stylized form of the heart-eye of Eka. The two heart-eyes at the entrance of the cavern show that this cavern is no mere physical form accidentally made by wind and rain.[11] We are reminded here that also in the last scene of “*Long Scroll of Mountains and Rivers*,” there is a rock that has the same “heart-eye” as the entrance of the cavern in the work “*Eka cuts his elbow*.”

The whole body of Bodhidharma, except his face, is covered with a white piece of cloth, which has surely the same meaning as the “snow” in the last scene in “*Long Scroll of Mountains and Rivers (part)*.”(Figure 12) Bodhidharma’s body is a phenomenon wrapped with the white



Fig.12: Long Scroll of Mountains and Rivers (2)

robe of the “emptiness”. Eka cut off his arm in order to show that his “heart” is never to be grasped. His hand is now also in the mode of the “empty hand” which has no substance and does not come into appearance. Sesshū must have known the Zen-word, “With empty hands grasp a spade, and ride a water buffalo while walking

on foot.” This empty hand of Eka is depicted on the same height as the seat of Bodhidharma. The thick line depicting the knee and shoulder of Bodhidharma, when it is prolonged, reaches the head and the right arm of Eka, so that the position of Eka can be seen as that of the “successor” of Bodhidharma.

The eye of Eka has the same quality as that of Dharma in the sense that it does not look at anything outside. It is directed to his own “heart,” like the self-portrait of Dürer, but the heart

of the latter expresses “Godness,” while the former expresses “emptiness.” The middle finger of the left hand of Eka, which was cut off, is directed upwards and its line, if prolonged, connects with the line of the back of Bodhidharma. It indicates the “upward direction” in Zen practice. His right hand holding the left hand is covered with a piece of cloth like the body of Bodhidharma. The real body in the sense of emptiness is the origin of his activity, but it must be concealed as the invisible “heart.”[12] Thus, the work “Eka cuts [off his arm at] the elbow” can be regarded not only as a painting of “human beings,” but also and in truth a painting of the inner “nature,” which is expressed as the nature of the cavern in the mountain.

All these works, “*Mountain and River Painting in Autumn and Winter*,” “*Long Scroll of Mountains and Rivers*,” and “*Eka cuts [off his arm at] the elbow*,” depict the Chinese landscape and

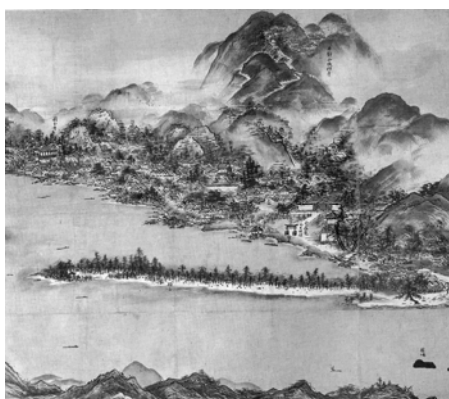


Fig.13: Ama no hashidate

the figure of Chinese human beings which Sesshū himself saw during his stay in China. In order to express his own “heart,” one more step remains, and this is realized in his last masterpiece, “*Ama no hashidate*” (Figure 13), the landscape in the northern district of Kyoto. In this work, all the names of the places elaborately depicted existed once or exist still today, so that they give clues to pinpoint the year of this work. But it is also known that there is no real place from which one can look down Amanohashidate from this angle. The work is not a realist painting, but obviously it is also not a fiction.

Usually the realist painting means that a real object is depicted. It aims at “resemblance.” But, to underscore what seems to be self-evident and banal at first, resemblance means that the depicted figure is not the real object as itself. Can an artwork, so long as it depicts something, do so only in the way of “mimêsis”? Can an object in a realist painting never be depicted in its “self”? It is a fundamental and philosophical question, whether there can be no depiction of things as mimêsis in the usual sense of the word, that is, as a copy. Should the possibility be excluded of seeing something in its “self” by way of becoming one with this something? Is it not possible for a painter to depict something by way of becoming this object?

Let us look into the work “*Ama no hashidate*” (Figure 13) again. Sesshū paints the whole view, but at the same time he depicts the small details without distinguishing between near and far things. The whole view is seen just with its details in close-up, so that the feeling of reality is expressed in every part. There is still another secret in producing this realistic feeling. It is the way of depicting human beings, which are seemingly nowhere to be found, though the small details are depicted so elaborately. This is not because human beings are too small to be depicted. It is often the case that in usual mountain-water paintings, the small figures of human beings in high and steep mountains are depicted somewhere. The scale of the landscape “*Ama no hashidate*” must enable the depiction of human beings. Truly, they are depicted, but not in the way in which they can be distinguished as human figures with arms and legs. For example, we see some boats on the sea, and in the boat small dark points. There are some points also in the inner part of the temple gate. When we gaze at them attentively, perhaps with a magnifying glass, we can perceive four persons talking with each other.



Sesshū painted, in addition to “*Ama no hashidate*”, some works in which boats are floating in a big river, and human beings on the boat are depicted like small dark points. But in these works, the details of the landscape are not so elaborately depicted as in “*Ama no hashidate*.” What does it mean for us? It means that the landscape “*Ama no hashidate*” is not the world in which no human beings exist, but rather the world where human beings blend in with the natural world. They are not absent. Rather, *nature expresses the way of human existence*. One is reminded of the words of the Zen master Dōgen, who wrote: “The present mountains and rivers are the presence of the way of old Buddhas.” Sesshū himself blends in with the landscape “*Ama no hashidate*” and depicts all as his *selfless self*, so that he himself, his hand and eye, are present in every tree, every house, every rock and boat. Formally, one can say that all artworks, in so far as they are produced by the artist, express the hand and eye of the artist. But it is another problem, if just this banal fact builds the essential character of the work. In “*Ama no hashidate*” we can feel the presence of Sesshū himself. When we see in the canvas the landscape of “*Ama no hashidate*”, then the painter Sesshū retreats and hides himself behind the landscape. He is “empty” in the sense that he is nowhere to be grasped. But if we see the whole landscape as the existence of the painter himself and regard it as the presence of Sesshū, as was meant in the words of Dōgen, then the landscape “*Ama no hashidate*” retreats as landscape and becomes “empty”. Sesshū reaches the art-world in which the Zen word is realized: “In having nothing, the inexhaustible all is present”.

### Closing reflection

What will come out of the comparative study above of Dürer and Sesshū in view of the spiritual history in Europe and Japan? The two painted worlds could be characterized with the concepts, Godness and emptiness.[13] The concepts do not indicate two separate worlds, because Godness is neither an entity nor some being, and the emptiness expresses here the unexhaustible all. The expressions are quite *different* from each other, but not *alien* to each other, because the spiritual sphere they indicate are *in accordance with* each other in the deep layer. We find there a marvelous accordance expressed six centuries ago by two painters, the one in Europe and the another in Japan.

This fact brings us to a question which goes beyond the range of an aesthetic reflection, the question about the whereabouts of the spiritual ground of the age past and that of the contemporary world. The world today has become not only secular but also ‘a-religious’ in the sense that religion as itself no longer possesses the central function of giving the sense to the life or of forming the world, except in the political context. In the pictorial works of both painters is reflected precisely the world of theirs which has become alien to our world, and just because of this alien-ness these works put our world into question regarding the significance of life and nature. A consideration of this question is the original motif of the present comparative reflection.

## Notes

- [1] The original Japanese version of this paper was published in: *Scheringu nempō* (Schelling Jahrbuch), Vol.15, 2007, pp.19-31. This paper is not a faithful translation of the original. It was presented at the symposium, organized by Prof. Dennis Hirota and held in Center for Buddhism and Contemporary Thought at Ryūkoku University/Kyoto on 25. October 2007. The text was grammatically checked and bettered by Prof. Hirota, and the author is deeply grateful for him. This version shortens the original and contains some corrections which are designated in annotation 2, 9 and 11.
- [2] In the original of this paper the author adopted this interpretation, but here he finds necessary to change his interpretation.
- [3] See for example the following web site which is well-known and regarded in general as reliable: [http://gallery.euroweb.hu/html/d/durer/1/10/5\\_4holy2.html](http://gallery.euroweb.hu/html/d/durer/1/10/5_4holy2.html). But the reason given in this web site for identification of Paul, that Paul was decapitated with sword, is too roundabout. A direct reference to the Holy Testament should be adopted, as is done here.
- [4] Fedia Anzelewsky, *Albrecht Dürer. Das malerische Werk*. Berlin, 1971. (Japanese edition with the translation: Tokyo 1982) : “Das wesentliche Problem bei der Konstruktion ist die Ermittlung des goldenen Schnittes. Winzinger hat ihn anscheinend rechnerisch festgelegt. Dürer dürfte ihn konstruiert haben. Er kann dafür zwei Methoden verwendet haben. Beide haben den Vorzug größter Einfachheit und lassen sich mit “Zirkel und Richtscheit” ausführen. (S. 166 in the Japanese edition).
- [5] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*, Originalwerke, VII, p. 354.
- [6] *Ibid.*, p. 364.
- [7] *Ibid.*, p. 363.
- [8] *Ibid.*, p. 357.
- [9] In the original version (see the annotation 1) the author interpreted them as trees and not as rock wrinkles. Concerning this part, the interpretation should be corrected on the grounds of the traditional “code.” The author owes this understanding to Arata Shimao, a well-known Sesshū specialist. There still remains a problem in that a free, vigorous, vertical line in the middle of the picture deviates far from this traditional code, as Shimao pointed out, and can not be explained by it. The right side far away of the precipice deviates also from the appearance of a part of the cliff. It looks like a mountain area with trees, as the author presented at the opportunity of the symposium for the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Sesshū, held in the Yamaguchi prefectural museum on 3. November 2006, together with Shimao. The author presented there an earlier version of this paper.
- [10] See the Kōan collection *Kattōshū*, Chap. 1 “*Relieving the heart of the Second Patriarch.*” The same scene is also given in the 41th question of the Kōan collection “*Mumonkan*”.
- [11] Here, the structural analysis of this picture is more detailed than in the original version of the paper. This revision is in author’s view one of the important differences between the Japanese and English version.
- [12] The similar case is found in the work of Ryōkai “*Sakyamuni-Dharma descending the mountain*”. The hand of Sakyamuni is covered with a piece of cloth. See R. Ohashi, *Der Ort des Augenblicks. Zu den Bildern “Krönung Mariens” und “Sakyamuni”*, in: *Sein und Nichts*, (Mitautor: H. Rombach und K. Tsujimura), Herder Verlag, Freiburg i.Br. 1981, S. 56-71.
- [13] The author is conscious that the word Godness is not given in a dictionary. The more common expression is “divinity,” which may have too broad a meaning. “Godhead” also comes to mind, but this may be overly specific as the “God beyond God.” “Godhood” is possible, but rare in English, and would seem to be reserved for God. In order to be careful and to avoid any bias for a comparative reflection, the author allows him the curious word Godness”.