Biblische Spuren des Gastes
Biblical Traces of the Guest
by Kurt Appel

Abstract
This text argues that the figure of the guest is rarely recognized in theology as well as in European philosophical tradition although the guest is one of the most important categories in the Bible. It claims that the phenomenon of the guest can serve as an implicit critique of the concept of the person as a self-sufficient ego and a critique of searches for fixed identities that always proceed on the basis of the exclusion of others. An important characteristic of the guest is that she/he can never be entirely identified or defined. Hospitality shows itself when one neither claims the guest as belonging to the own realm nor defines the Other as a foreigner to be excluded. By referring to different pericopes in the Bible, the text aims to show that there is a subtle connection between the biblical name of God JHWH and the guest. Abraham and Sara meet their guests with hospitality and an affective openness and subsequently learn that JHWH reveals himself in the guest who responds to their hospitality with the promise of life. The article shows that this implies that the fundament which underlies our being is not self-identity but instead, like the guest, Being revokes any final identification and needs to be conceived of as radical openness. The final part of the article tries to follow the traces of the guest in the modern occidental philosophical tradition, in Leibniz’s, Kant’s and Hegel’s philosophy which all take up the thought that the Self cannot be thought of as underlayed by a delimitable and controllable fundament.

Keywords: Guest, Hospitality, JHWH, Abraham, Hegel, Kant, Leibniz, Bahr, Question of God, Jesus, Bible