

Editorial: The Millennium and Philosophy

What is there to celebrate at the millennium? Or, to put it differently, what if we were celebrating the millennium would it be that we were celebrating? Of course, the millennium might be just an even more than usually lavish and excessive Christmas, Christmas itself having been largely emptied of any meaning, religious or secular, and little more than a pretext for lavishness and excess.

But like Christmas, the millennium is rooted in the events, mythical and historical, surrounding the founding of Christianity. And Christianity is a religion of the Book and of revelation. In the Christian scheme of things, value derives from the Book and from revelation. And as Christianity's followers and some of its critics understood, the values promulgated in Christianity may not be easy to sustain once the Book and the revelation are forgotten.

Over the Christian millennia, philosophy has played its part in upholding Book and revelation, and also, more recently, in undermining them. The latter has come to be seen as philosophy's more characteristic role, implying that Book and revelation sit uneasily with autonomous reason. But is this so, and if so, what follows for the values originally promulgated in Christianity and which many of us still accept? Hardly original questions, but ones with genuinely millennial significance.