

Visions of Festivities Thinking

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Abstract:

For social sciences, festivities of Portuguese-American communities in New England work to solve questions of identity and community. But observable discordances arise between tradition and innovation. As it happens, appraising the *arraial* suits Madeiran feast traditions. Provided are three creative appraisals, which are informed by authorities and arguments in the history of philosophy. This article demonstrates remarkable interchanges between philosophy and world feast traditions. For philosophy, *arraiais* exhibit human flourishing with commitments to wise and knowledgeable expertise, observant thinking, and intellectual exchange.

Keywords:

Intellect, Feasts, *Arraial*, Observance, Disputation

Resumo:

Para ciências sociais, festividades de comunidades luso-americanas na Nova Inglaterra servem para resolver questões de identidade e comunidade. Mas discordâncias observáveis formam entre a tradição e a inovação. Acontece que avaliar o arraial convém tradições de festas Madeirenses. Aqui se propõe três avaliações criativas, informadas por autoridades e argumentos na história de filosofia. Intercâmbios notáveis entre a filosofia e tradições de festas mundiais se formam. Para a filosofia, arraiais florescem com compromissos à perícia sábia e versada, ao pensamento observador, e à troca intelectual.¹

Palavras-chave:

Intelecto, Festas, Arraial, Observância, Disputação

¹ Abstract translated by Pedro Lopes de Almeida

Opening

One Portuguese-American celebration in New England has attained centennial honors: the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament in New Bedford, Massachusetts. A long, unbroken record of annual feasts imparts to anyone who hears the report the sense that this tradition is flourishing. Similarly, newspaper reports of large crowds and rows of empty wine casks indicate unwavering approval (“Largest Crowd”). All this success is inspiring, given the modest setting: working-class neighborhoods in New Bedford’s North End. Even more inspiring, this beloved feast honors profound spiritual commitments brought by groups of immigrants from the Island of Madeira early in the twentieth century (Cabral 40–42). For this reason, the celebration is known to some as “the Madeira Feast.” In allusion to its large attendance, it is known as “the Big Feast.” Immaculate Conception Church, adjacent to Madeira Field, maintains the official title: “Annual Feast in Honor of the Blessed Sacrament” (Catholic Church, “Nineteenth”). Like ethnic celebrations everywhere, the Madeira Feast showcases traditional cuisine, cultural performances, popular music, and carnival. The Madeira Feast also accompanies aforementioned spiritual commitments: the outside of the church building is decorated, and the four-day gathering culminates with a Roman Catholic Mass and a Sunday parade. Diverse connotations and affiliations are also signs of human flourishing.

One insight distinguishing the history of philosophy in Europe is about human flourishing (*eudaimonia*). Ancient and medieval intellectuals saw flourishing as an attainment beyond fame and worldly success: flourishing belongs to higher activities and aims (Aristotle 1095b–1096a, 1097b; Aquinas, *Summa* I–II, Q. 2–3). The insight from philosophy may be brought to the appraisal of Portuguese-American celebrations. What I explore are missions of festivities like the Madeira Feast and fresh, philosophical insights about good conduct of the *arraial* for future generations. Among compositions and authors called to service are *Politeia* by the philosopher Plato, two 20th-century discourses from Martin Heidegger, St. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*, and Professor S. Cabral’s *Tradition and Transformation*, published in 1989. Also included are compositions of importance to the Roman Catholic sponsor and to all citizens who cherish the Madeira Feast: Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si’*, Pope St. John’s *Pacem in Terris*, and Pope Urban IV’s 1264 *Transiturus* document. What missions to commemorate and host outside visitors envision are commitments to intellectual activity, without which feast traditions may not flourish.

Conducted Festivities

Questions of festivals and feasts emerge in Sacred and classical texts. In the Book of Job, a family committed to an elaborate feast tradition suffer catastrophe (*CEV*, 1:13–19). In Luke, Jesus is separated from Joseph and Mary on the occasion of the Feast of the Passover (2:41–52). The Last Supper, also during Passover, completes the gathering of the Apostles and harbors betrayal (22:1–13). Festivities then and now distribute benefits to adults, children, and guests alike. But the reader discerns in tradition’s powerful narratives a moral aside: festivities gather but also disperse us. In short, festivities invite danger.

In classical philosophy, the intellectual exploits of Plato’s Socrates entwine with local festivities.² The book-length dialogue *Politeia* offers arguments justifying the conclusion that festivities require guidance of persons committed to wisdom and justice. This conclusion may be brought to 21st-century feasts celebrating ethnicity and community. Remarkably, the festival with which *Politeia* opens has features in common with the Madeira Feast, which has been hosted and celebrated in the North

² Cf. *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Politeia* (*Republic*)

End of the City of New Bedford for the past century (“About Us”). Let us observe the similarities and also discover what any contemporary Plato might say about feast philosophy for the 21st century.

Politeia opens with Socrates departing the port municipality adjacent to Athens known as Piraeus, where we find maritime and public works, and on this occasion a new festival. Plato informs us about the nature of the festival: neighboring city-states have sent troops of emissaries to showcase talents and dress. It is therefore a regional festival celebrating ethnicity. Furthermore, it must be a festival that is conducted and hosted. Otherwise, distinct municipalities could not be gathered in this way. Plato informs us that *conduct* is one of two reasons for the philosopher’s visit:

I went down to the Piraeus yesterday ... to offer a prayer to the goddess. Also, I wanted to watch the festival, to see how they would conduct it, since this was the first time it was being celebrated. The parade of Athenians struck me as excellent, and the show put on by the Thracians was every bit as impressive.... (327a)

All features noted are components of the Madeira Feast, populated with ethnic communities who parade in costumes and situated in New Bedford, with its maritime port and hurricane barrier. Moreover, the Madeira Feast carries an essential affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church, in this case the Immaculate Conception Church (Catholic Church, “Nineteenth”). Like Plato’s Socrates, some persons who attend the Feast also participate in Sunday Mass.

There are further similarities: Plato lets us know through banter that, after dark, the festival in Piraeus will be filled with many young persons and an all-night ceremony is to take place (328b). Again, the Madeira Feast is just the same. After dark, the area known as Madeira Field teems with humanity, shoulder to shoulder, conversing above the din and holding plastic cups of Madeira wine; on the grand stage are flashing, colorful spotlights and super-amplified music performances. For celebrants, the night feast is the showcase event, possibly the essence of the festivities. For others, the night feast is a surprising, alarming contrast to daylight commitments. This is similar to Socrates’s response in *Politeia*.

“Haven’t you heard about the torch race?” Adeimantus added. “This evening, on horseback, in honour of the goddess?”

“On horseback?” I said. “That’s something new. Do you mean a relay race on horseback, passing torches from one to another?” (328a)

Socrates then agrees to stay. For the reader the point of departure—a new festival honoring the goddess—is irrelevant to all that follows: intellectual conversation on questions of true justice (367e). But one purpose of Socrates (i.e., to observe the conduct of diverse people) is at the heart of the whole inquiry (369, 373b). Moreover, Plato’s conversation at points refers to festivals and feast items.³ First, there is the argument that luxuries, exoticism, outdoing others, and pulsing crowds function contrary to justice and human flourishing (373, 434b, 492b); second, there is the redeeming argument that all these things may populate human life so long as human life is conducted by wise guides (428d, 473d). The basic philosophy of *Politeia* provides the intellectual nuts and bolts. Consider first the reasoning that resembles disquiet about festivities like the Madeira Feast.

For anyone thinking like Plato, all beings are themselves natures disposed and called to specific or elaborate tasks, the fulfillment of which is in theory happiness (370b-d, 421c). Given that none are wholly self-sufficient, Plato concludes that happiness must be shared, and shared happiness requires

³ Cf. 329a; 364c; 421b; 459e.

community conduct; persons may pursue given tasks in concert and in exchange with others pursuing their given tasks (369c; 421a). Objections form about Plato's vision, though some may be answered. What is important in *Politeia* is the claim that products, activities, and services that confound or multiply tasks constitute habitual injustice (374a-e, 434a-c). The discussion identifies as troublesome luxuries and spectacles, such as pastries, animal meats, wild performers, money-makers presiding as authorities, unruly music, decorations, and provocative books (372d–399e). For Plato, these are all items that escalate life. To this list we may add intoxicants; in short, products, acts, and personalities of festivities.

Consider the redeeming argument. The newcomer to Plato concludes that the stuff of festivities is contrary to goodness and happiness. Yes, Socrates and friends deliberate to ban from the ideal community items deemed inherently disorderly—e.g., unruly music (377b, 398a). But most may be allowed. For Plato, this is possible only by prior commitment to the intellects of persons who by nature are qualified to be experts and officials (428d). It is Plato's contribution that the persons most expert are either men or women empowered to discern hidden natures (i.e., persons empowered to examine complex luxuries and spectacles). Thus, we are brought to Plato's remarkable statement, "Only when kings are philosophers, philosophers kings" may communities flourish and luxuriate (473d). Again, only with wise leadership may people keep the delights allied to ethnicity and festivity. In *Politeia* Book V, Socrates and his friends are depicted envisioning a city festival conducted by expert guides who, knowing each citizen, form lasting marriages and offspring (459e).

There is substantial humor in *Politeia* about measures hypothesized (cf., 372, 432, 460). Moreover, Plato's idealism is often doubted (Aristotle 1096a–b). Nonetheless, the claim about the conduct of festivities is, for Plato and for us, reasonable and suited for contemporary translation. Consider a sample of platonic reasoning about what may belong to community gatherings and what may not. Start with Plato's example: performers riding on horseback and carrying blazing torches at dusk (328a). Now, this feat may in fact recreate public utilities in the ancient world: distributing light among country estates. So far it is defined and valuable. But added to one set of skills (i.e., managing one's horse and negotiating horses in competition) is a second skill set (i.e., holding aloft and maintaining a fiery object alight). According to Plato's interlocutors, "no individual is capable of practicing several arts or skills properly" (374a). Moreover for Plato, in order for jockeys to be true jockeys, they must pursue "what is good for horses" (342c). So, for anyone thinking like Plato, fulfilling the horseracing task is not at all identical with fulfilling the torch-bearing task. In the first instance, the torch may be a useful item to ward off competitors. In the second, the torch of light is a precious item more important than horses who, accordingly, are put at risk. In sum, the portrait given to Socrates at the start of *Politeia* envisions multiple crises. It is plausible that the most brazen, reckless performer may do all tasks at once. For anyone thinking like Plato, though, this is not virtue but injustice; injustice is not something to showcase as representative of culture. Nor does injustice honor Bendis, to whom the festival is dedicated.

For the modern Plato, community leadership of festivities must be skilled to think as proposed: leaders must be able to discern crises for whichever servers and visitors are unprepared and ignorant (520c). Leaders like physicians and mechanics should be qualified to direct repairs. As today's Portuguese-American celebrations mature and technological innovation enhances activity, the need for expert guidance flies fast ahead of ordinary reasoning. It may be that items and personalities that were formerly integral are now in conflict with new, promising commitments. It may be that some areas of custom, taken for granted by generations, need refreshing and revising. Let us consider Plato's philosophy in light of some particulars about the Madeira Feast in the 20th century.

Minding the *Arraial*

Suppose persons who are experts discover benefits from privileges accompanying expertise. Deliberate pursuit of benefits in time competes with commitments to discovery and truth; consequently, expertise retreats. That is how Plato sees things—that is how people today see things. Moreover, Plato's Socrates argues that for an expert to be truly expert he or she must pursue the good of what and who are dependent (342–346). For example, a hostess, to truly be a hostess, must pursue the happiness of servers and guests, otherwise (for anyone thinking like Plato) she is not a hostess. Again, Plato and Socrates are unique in insisting that expertise is intellectual: persons must have what in *Politeia* he calls wisdom (376c, 428d). Plato's *wisdom* includes several areas of intellectual activity, i.e., identifying, knowing, judging, and deciding (376b, 428b–e). Moreover, Plato's usual examples are in areas of perceptive knowing (*episteme*) like medicine, navigation, and culinary arts (342). In sum, expertise (i.e., perceptive knowing) is, for Plato, concerned with discovering and pursuing the good, or happiness, of whatever and whoever is under study. Let us inventory traditional experts and expertise in 20th-century Madeira Feasts and justify the discord anthropologist S. Cabral documents in the 1970s in light of Plato's concept. Let us also hear cogent argument for one unopened area of expertise for the 21st-century, i.e., environmental expertise.

With the Madeira Feast, it is the outdoor *arraial* calling for expertise. In Portuguese, *arraial* names the location of festivities devoted to cuisine, socializing, and spectacles, apart from the church (Cabral 30). According to Cabral's *Tradition and Transformation*, on the Island of Madeira *arraiais* are traditionally conducted by four males (*festeiros*) who form spiritual promises called *promessas* and who each win permission from the local parish to conduct a given feast (27, 30). Together, these four are responsible for collecting donations, erecting poles and arches for the street procession, and decorating the front of the church building (28–30). For the Sunday evening feast, *festeiros* host the conduct of food, beverages, music, and auctions for the congregation and out-of-town visitors (30). In short, *festeiros* become expert hosts who manage myriad concerns, some of which are decided by custom and some of which require specific expertise, such as electrical wiring. Musicians bring their own expertise, but *festeiros* must choose and hire the musicians. Individual cooks and domestic artisans also bring what is expertise. According to Cabral's field work, above all hosts and experts is the supernatural host, i.e., the patron saint embodying Divine commitments and virtues, to whom any feast is dedicated (39). Also, Cabral claims that guests bring expertise insofar as they participate in assessing *arraial* success (30).

Cabral explores island feast traditions, early New Bedford feasts, and mid-20th Century feasts (28–52). Cabral's research shows that, by mid-century, the autonomous four-host model gives way in North America to a nonprofit social club model called the *Clube Madeirense S. S. Sacramento*, with hundreds of members, a feast committee whose roster changes from year to year, and an annual corps of volunteer servers (44–52). Also, temporary structures give way to permanent feast grounds and buildings (46); pre-feast donations from congregation members give way to food, beverage, and craft sales efficiently converted to sizeable funds for church donation (50). According to Cabral, the commitments of the Island of Madeira and early New Bedford to Mass and Procession change to accommodate the diverse public attracted to the *arraial* (45–46). For anyone thinking like Plato, there are also changes in expertise (50–52).

The inventory of expertise for post-traditional feasts is similar to the inventory for any large public venue hosting hundreds of thousands of people: carpenters, plumbers, electricians, fire inspectors, food inspectors, security officers, choreographers, videographers, sound and stage engineers, fado singers, museum archivists, vintners, importers, marketers, lawyers, accountants, investors, and gift officers. Members of the *Clube Madeirense* (and specifically the feast committee) conduct the hired experts, volunteers, food preparation in *barracas*, the maintenance of facilities, committee meetings,

and feast setup and cleanup—in short, the tasks traditionally reserved for *festeiros*. Adjacent to the expert core are municipal agencies, nonprofit groups, church leadership, and private businesses, all bringing expert contributions (“Feast”; Cabral 78). In attendance during the actual four days of festivities are also guest experts and officials (77, 91). In the centennial year 2014, for example, among those attending was Madeira’s expert on Tourism, Culture, and Transportation. The official urges New Bedford’s feast to invite women to leadership appointments (“Madeiran Tourism”).

Diversity, cooperation, and complicating expertise appear promising. But in the 1970s Cabral documents discord between descendants of early Madeiran immigrants and late-20th-century immigrants (25) and between commitments to traditional worship and to what was and is now billed as “the largest Portuguese feast in the world” (52, 60; “About Us”). Moreover, in fieldwork Cabral documents leadership deficits (61–73). He claims that deliberate efforts to invite women to serve among hosts begin in the 1950s, but efforts fall short of leadership (47). Besides Cabral, there are impressions of anyone visiting evening and nighttime feasts of the 21st-century: shoulder-to-shoulder crowds after dark, hopeless queues, and blocked egress. Some descendants of early 20th-century migrants and some lifelong New Bedford residents refuse to attend. In short, today’s disquiet belongs to the cluster of discordances Cabral records. Given the growing community of expertise and participation, discord and disquiet should be solvable.

For Cabral, the influx of novel, American values among Madeiran descendants in the middle of the century and the halt in immigration explain the unsolved troubles (25, 47–52). Corporate structure, hosting very large crowds, and technological spectacle are, for some American-Portuguese descendants, social accomplishments—even if these detract from tradition (52). But after the millennium, Cabral’s sociological explanation appears preferential to 20th-century drama: waves of innovation continue to arrive, early New Bedford feasts embrace pyrotechnics and “large numbers of outsiders” (Endnote), and ancient Greeks express the exact same commitments. “There’ll be lots of young people there,” exclaims Polemarchus to philosopher Socrates (328b). Moreover, after the millennium, elaborations of the feast blueprint (such as the Museum of Madeiran Heritage and the Courtyard Café) alleviate some crowd issues and refresh some commitments to custom, even as the newest visual and solar technologies are appropriated. In short, there exist efforts to balance discordant commitments; all these efforts are conducted by experts. A new cogent explanation of unresolved troubles alights on the rationality at work and on the scene, i.e., habits of decision-making and expertise.

Let us focus on expertise. Coming from Plato’s *Politeia*, troubles unsolved among community are in truth unjust habits, e.g., assuming too many tasks (434). Given what we and Plato know about expertise, a first explanation is already given: pursuit of benefits on the part of experts outpaces service to dependents, i.e., visitors, so that service falls short. For example, belonging to the feast committee brings me a job offer and family recognition to the extent I no longer do good work as *festeiro* in the weeks prior to the feast. For his part, Cabral documents benefits of “prestige” and strengthened family relations among *Clube Madeirense* members and *festeiros* (40, 86). But all hosts and volunteers are duly informed of the charitable mission of the Madeira Feast. Some temporary experts may be less informed. For example, hired photographers who capture feast photos without permission of visitors do not pursue good journalism. In sum, benefits may counter service on the part of experts in specific cases. But this explanation is insufficient for the whole community of experts across the decades.

A second explanation: given what Plato and we believe, commitment to expertise assumes commitment to discovery, truth, and new ideas. If areas of feast expertise are habitually assumed from year to year and work becomes efficient, then true expertise may retreat. Shortcuts become habitual; visitor demand entrenches efficiency. In time, there is no openness among experts to new approaches. This is a plausible explanation for unresolved, ordinary issues across decades, e.g., languishing commitments to female leadership (Cabral 47). Despite the mid-century changes Cabral documents,

the Madeira Feast is loyal to particular feast items and preparations. Feast items inventoried by Cabral in the 1970s are among menu items for sale after the millennium (82; “Food and Drink”). But some organizations of ethnic minority groups carry exaggerated pride (Catholic Church, *Pacem* 10, 39–41). It may be menu items celebrated as food icons of Madeira are in truth particular to certain segments of an overall population. It may be that some overlooked items do a better job representing, for example, cuisine of the North End. Including the same menu items from year to year justifies an unsought consequence: men and women who are otherwise creative, expert cooks become highly efficient food preparators. To conclude, loyalty to certain items and practices works against intellectual commitments.

Third: given that expertise requires a commitment to discovery, truth, and new ideas, there is also the assumed commitment shared among scientists, artists, and builders to explore areas of ignorance, e.g., unsolved, persisting problems. But some persons are reluctant to pursue matters deemed out of bounds or beyond their expertise; accordingly, areas of ignorance remain unexplored. This explains large, long-term feast issues for which experts do not have solutions at hand. For example, Acushnet River, close to the site of Madeira Field, holds deposits of organic sewage and toxic chemicals accumulating in time with 20th-century feast history (Pesch et. al. 15–16, 19–20). Other areas of ignorance are, in truth, solvable. Transportation and parking for hundreds of thousands of visitors over four days, for example, is a solvable problem.

In sum, discord is unresolved because, in areas of expertise, local conflicts of interest and close-mindedness preclude expert solutions. Moreover, some experts are to be excused because they are assigned to specific areas or because they exchange work with other experts. But some experts work in general areas of the *arraial*; some serve as experts of experts. These experts have opportunities to incorporate new ideas or to identify areas for further study. In 20th-century feasts, among the last group are the hosts proper (i.e. members of the feast committee) and *Clube Madeirense* who together own feast properties, work months and weeks in advance, and conduct joint decision-making (Cabral 61–62). Some difficult, expert hosting issues are determined by the head *festeiro* who qualifies by prior experience, family, and elections (“2019 Feast President”). But issues from electrical wiring all the way to hurricane activity exceed the ordinary reasoning of human persons. Accordingly, civil laws and policies provide useful guidance. Similarly, professions and trades provide background information, good practices, and model equipment.

What I claim is the following: if 21st-century Madeira Feasts are to be festivities thinking, then perceptive knowing (i.e., expertise) is among the feast accomplishments. Laws, customs, and professions are reliable guides. However, the reasoning informing reliable guides may be obscure and unproven; laws, customs, and codes conflate. In short, we are not yet thinking even as we conform to rational guidance. But philosophical reasoning flourishes at the headwaters. One activity of philosophy, demonstrated in Plato’s dialogues, is the recovery of lost assumptions and justifications. For festivities and nonprofit organizations, the most important ideas are given in the mission statement; to be philosophical about festivities we first of all recover our understanding of the mission. We converse about what the statement tells us, what act or activity (*ergon*) defines the whole affair, what reasonings are given, we ask ourselves if we in practice adhere, and whether the mission may be improved or revised. In the recovery effort, we may look over historical statements and authoritative texts just as constitutional experts do. The goal is a philosophical sense of what the festivities are all about; on this basis, laws, customs, and codes are truly applicable. Experts form good insights. In short, a fresh sense of mission is a fruitful departure for expert thinking.

Let us practice philosophical inquiry about a nuts-and-bolts matter like parking. After the millennium, the Madeira Feast offers no public parking for hundreds of thousands of visitors arriving in private vehicles; nor does City of New Bedford designate feast parking areas (“FAQ”). As in all

neighborhoods of New Bedford, on-street parking near Madeira Field is occupied by residents' vehicles. At feast time, two alternatives are pursued: one may park in one of a handful of unimproved lots with undisclosed ownership who, on Feast occasions, post "PARKING \$10" signs and agents to collect money for parking spots, or one may cruise the arrowy North End streets for unoccupied, on-street parking and walk ("FAQ"). Either way, dangers are apparent. Vacant lot owners and their agents may or may not be affiliated with the *Clube Madeirense* and the Madeira Feast. Moreover, the vacant lot owners may or may not be licensed, insured, and expert in parking. On-street parking by visitors competes with resident parking, and visitors assume unknown risks driving around the North End. One traditional item of the Feast is Madeira wine. Some visitors enjoy Madeira wine during their stay on Madeira Field, and any given feast day hosts tens of thousands doing about the same thing. In short, ordinary parking and driving issues escalate in tandem.

To approach what are matters of transportation and parking expertise, we first ask: *What is the mission of the festivities?* Plausibly, the mission offers a clue about commitments to parking. At least three statements are available ("About Us;" Endnote; Catholic Church, *Transiturus*). A concise but complete mission statement is given in the 2015 feast title used by the Immaculate Conception Church: "Annual Feast in Honor of the Blessed Sacrament" ("Nineteenth"). This statement accords with the detailed mission given in the 1919 *Avorada Diária* newspaper announcement including the statement "...os festejos em honra do Santíssimo Sacramento" (Endnote). Paraphrasing the 1919 mission statement: *To honor Blessed Sacrament with solemn Mass and procession, and to gather in orderly fashion all persons including out of town persons for hours of socializing and conducted music.* This statement captures the two-part mission of the Madeira Feast, similar to the two-part mission of the Piraeus celebration honoring the goddess.

Without knowing particulars, we infer, as *festeiros* explain in 1919 and as Cabral finds through fieldwork in the 1970s, that the first goal is by tradition prioritized over the second (26–28, 79); also, commitment to a two-part mission assumes commitment to orderliness and "good order,"—e.g., visitors are to be empowered by hosts to negotiate without obstacle nor risk from the crowded *arraial* to the occasion of worship, from worship to the *arraial* celebration, and by the same token from their vehicles to feast grounds. The dual mission is not as clearly heard in the condensed title *Feast of the Blessed Sacrament*, also given in the 1919 statement and in all official Madeira Feast literature (Endnote; "Feast"); for persons of Roman Catholic faith this title may refer poetically and only to communion, an inheritance of the Last Supper (cf., Mann 45). What Cabral and what any expert tourist inspecting the *arraial*, the website, and local journalism infers is the secular mission: *To gather all peoples to commemorate the safe arrival of Madeirans in the 20th Century* (93; "Let the Feast Begin"; "About Us"). But Cabral's fieldwork shows that the secular mission becomes embellished (41–42). In 2014, the centennial year, New Bedford's mayor announces that the Madeira Feast abounds with love ("All About Love"). Disagreement within the mission statement, or multiple competing statements call for repairs on the part of expert hosts. Plausibly, some conflicts and close-mindedness have a source in issues related to the mission.

Given that the Madeira Feast is according to its mission a temporary annual gathering, it may be that nonprofit hosts and City of New Bedford hosts carry no civil responsibility for visitor parking. On the other hand, historical and Church mission statements carry an assumed commitment to orderliness. The secular rendering with its accompanying, embellished legend expresses a unique historic background: commitment to shared, safe transportation across the Atlantic. Plausibly, transportation or visitor parking are among items the Madeira Feast must provide as an approach to fulfilling its overall mission and ensuring the happiness of visitors. Now civil authorities and private corporations bring expertise to construct and staff large parking lots. But expensive measures compete with the charitable goal of raising funds. Another area of expertise also pursues and creatively solves issues of public transportation: environmental expertise, including alternative transportation and

urban sustainability. This emerging area of expertise is suited to the mission of the Madeira Feast for several reasons.

Like all public venues, Madeira Feast raises some environmental issues. First, there is the noise and garbage generated during four days of celebration. Second, there are the aforementioned hundreds of thousands of visitors, traveling from all quarters to park vehicles in working-class neighborhoods occupied by three-story tenements, mid-20th-century gas stations, and deserted mills. Third, there is the troubling environmental history: textile mills and electronics manufacturers who employed Madeirans and Azoreans (among others) and who, for decades, released pollution into the Acushnet River (Pesch et. al. 28). Fourth, there is the new invitation in 2015 from the Roman Catholic Church to all peoples to begin conversations about the world environment and to solve environmental disasters with expertise, dialogue, and ecological faith (*Laudato* 42, 109-132, 143). Moreover, there is the claim among social justice environmentalists that solving environmental issues solves issues encountered by children, by women, and by minority groups (35). For example, festivities with city avenues cordoned off for visitor parking are also festivities that are safe for children. In sum, the following areas of environmental expertise are promising for festivities: persons expert in lived environments, in recycling and restoration, and in alternate transportation—in short, we are talking about “green” Roman Catholic feasts. Nonprofit organizations may envision transportation alternatives that also pursue peaceable gatherings and neighborhood renewal. For his part, Plato’s Socrates walked to Piraeus, a distance of miles.

Following Plato, far ahead of commitments to sweets, meats, and unruly music are commitments to intellect and truth. What is now argued is the following: festivities in service to future generations are to be led by intellect in the form of expertise. For the most part, community and leadership bring needed expertise; everyone brings heart. For philosophy, visitors are themselves endowed with the power of intellect. Suppose hosted festivities conduct the intellects of participants prior to their sentiments and palates. One champion for this proposal lives in 20th-century Europe.

#Observant #Contemplating @festivities

In the period in which Azoreans and Madeirans depart for prosperity in America, one among the rising European intellectuals is Martin Heidegger (Safranski 3). If a philosophy for the times exists, for some it is Heidegger’s existentialism and phenomenology. The international *Being and Time* (1927) champions fresh, perplexing approaches to classic questions of philosophy. Heidegger’s celebrity is accordingly complex: he offers new language and insights, and he expresses what appears to be intellectual nostalgia. Like communities of Azorean and Madeiran immigrants, the innovator leans to tradition. For example, throughout his academic life Heidegger kept close to the mountains (“Why Do I Stay”); he compares intellectual activity to farming and forestry (123; “Memorial” 47). One intellectual concern for Heidegger is that 20th-century humanity is uprooted from its essence, homeland, and customs (45, 48; “Messkirch” 45). *Being and Time* is complex even in translation, but Heidegger also prepares compositions for local audiences and town festivities. These texts give insight into the larger compositions. Moreover, two orations speak about festivities. Let us explore how Heidegger’s insight regarding “festivities thinking” solves issues of technology and of homelessness, and then bring this to the Madeira Feast.

“Memorial Address” (1955) and “Messkirch’s Seventh Centennial” (1961) argue that festivities invite commitments to thinking (“Memorial” 44-45; “Messkirch” 41). Above all, claims Heidegger, this is because festivities carry missions to commemorate and recognize historical truths; such actions and truths require thinking (“Memorial” 44). Clearly everyone thinks. But Heidegger claims that historical truths evade ordinary efforts: in Messkirch, as in New Bedford, festivities invite commemorating persons in past centuries (“Memorial” 43), and in Messkirch, as in New Bedford,

festivities invoke the Medieval world (“Messkirch” 41; Cabral 26-28). Heidegger’s celebrated study of time informs us that the retrieval of what and who is past does not admit of obvious procedures; for ordinary thinking, the distant past is in oblivion (*Concept* 19E). To Messkirch, Heidegger points out a second difficulty: the introduction of technology challenges people to care for what is innovative and novel (“Memorial” 50–52; “Messkirch” 43–45). In embracing technology, he thinks, we abandon home, tradition, and past. Social scientists who study Portuguese-American festivities observe what are similar discordances at work (Cabral 52; Leal 133–136). Heidegger concludes that humanity, even if committed by essence to thinking, is nonetheless thought-poor and thought-relentless (“Memorial” 44–45, 53). Accordingly, for him, “keeping meditative thinking alive” is a priority and, what is more, thinking can be accomplished among people attending festivities (56). For him, thinking may counterbalance the claim of technology and recover the beginnings of home (“Messkirch” 45).

In the philosophy and theology inherited from Europe, different areas of intellectual activity are defined (Aristotle 1138b–1141a; Aquinas, *Summa* I–II, Q.57). Loftiest of these is contemplating (Q.66, a.5). Surprisingly, Heidegger’s thinking is not identical with contemplating. On his part, Heidegger uses the terms *denken* and *besinnen*, translated by North American scholars as *thinking* and *meditating* (“Memorial” 47). For example: “Thinking is indeed a serious matter, but at the same time a festive one” (“Messkirch” 55). In his orations, Heidegger provides insights about his vision: thinking may be pursued by anyone, thinking requires intention and practice, what is thought about are meanings not subject to perception, and what is to be thought about at festivities are realities that are near but not quite belonging to our lives (“Memorial” 46–47). Two items Heidegger proposes for festivities thinking are modern technology and the lost homeland (47, 53; “Messkirch” 45). The latter, Heidegger’s Messkirch (like the Madeira Feast) would recover, and the former, mid-20th-century citizens wish to curb. Again, Heidegger describes festive thinking as an “openness” which allows realities near to us to appear of their own accord (“Memorial” 55). By this non-perceptive approach to knowing, he thinks we begin to understand technology and homeland.

As noted, Heidegger is both innovative and traditional. For some, Heidegger’s “meditative thinking” repeats areas of European, Christian tradition (“Memorial” 54fn). But the concept is already known in ancient philosophy as an area of moral virtue. In ancient Greek, the term is *dikaïos*, translated as *law-abiding* and *observant* (Aristotle 1129b). Above all, the observant person is one who habitually obeys civil laws, customs, and church rituals (Plato 339b; Aquinas, *Summa* I–II, Q.60. a.3). So, a person like Socrates who prays and watches the new Piraeus festival pursues what is observance and observing (*dikaïosune*). What is important for the observant is authority, i.e., meaningful to me but also beyond me. Heidegger innovates by pointing out what Aristotle could not: a special form of thinking takes place alongside observance. For Heidegger, it is open-minded awaiting for what authority invites and promulgates: the influx of technology or the call of the homeland. Close study of Heidegger’s compositions shows that, for him, modern technology is something like authority, but that it is false (“Memorial” 51; “Messkirch” 47). For him, we have to think observantly to sense technology; festivities thinking are a “good occasion” to do this (“Messkirch” 45).

Heidegger’s *meditating* is close to the European tradition’s *contemplating*. Whereas *meditating* explores authority approaching ordinary life, *contemplating*, for the European tradition, is about authority beyond life and the condition of life (Aquinas, *Summa* I–II, Q.3, a.6 a.8). The argument Heidegger provides about observant thinking may be brought to contemplating, i.e., to thinking special to worship and wonder. For the European tradition, culminating with *Summa Theologiae* in the 13th century, to contemplate is to gaze (*theorein*) without perceiving upon Divine signs (I–II, Q.3, a.6–8). If Heidegger’s observance is the recovery of home on Earth, then it is plausible that tradition’s contemplating prepares one for home under Heaven.

For ancient and contemporary festivities, there is one difficulty. Given the un-perceiving, non-deliberative nature of higher forms of thinking, visitors must be truly free to think. If acts of

observance are demanded or if procedures for contemplating are coded in a set of rules, neither observant thinking nor contemplating is pursued. In the 1919 published statement, for example, *festeiros* exhort what constitutes observance: “...no single person of the Island of Madeira, being appointed by the members composing the commission, would refuse to contribute generously for such an end” (Endnote). Demands for observance fall short because an obscure authority forms. The Island of Madeira, commission members, and the anonymous author of the 1919 statement—all, or some, serve as my authority. For anyone thinking like Heidegger, persons who would be observant to obscure authority are endangered by thoughtless submission (“Memorial” 54).

Similarly, visitors thinking must be free to act as their consciences and backgrounds direct. Some persons are disposed to observe the City of New Bedford, some the Madeira homeland, and others the Immaculate Conception Church community. Approaches to contemplating also vary among persons and cultures. The Madeira Feast, after all, is open to all persons (“About Us”); for some, the *Feast of the Blessed Sacrament* expresses above all an invitation to worship. In short, what is wanted for festivities thinking are conditions of unfettered observance and free worship. On the creative side, what is needed are invitations to observe and contemplate. To conclude, Heidegger offers the hopeful insight that there exists in all of us the power to truly think (“Memorial” 47). For Heidegger, observant thinking is like walking silently upon forest paths (“Pathway” 33–37). Among authorities who, like Heidegger, champion what are intellectual approaches to recovering home are North American environmental authors advocating open spaces and pedestrian walks (Thoreau; Weston). Let us float a blueprint for festivities providing conditions for higher thinking and also inventory those invitations accomplished by the Madeira Feast after the millennium.

Festival Blueprint

The Madeira Feast’s mission invoking solemn worship, exhorting commemoration, and inviting all peoples into the vicinity of one world culture invokes, exhorts, and invites intellectual activity. Either the proposals are genuine, or there exists a hidden, unspoken mission. A free and public feast, the Madeira Feast’s mission as put into practice may be inferred by all visitors and any expert tourist; so, there can be no powerful, hidden mission. The conditions and invitations to think are the utmost feast luxuries and items, respectively. A *condition*, as a philosophical concept, is one condition or set of conditions that is sufficient to produce an event. Experts are qualified to know what these conditions are. For example, the master chef knows the inventory of conditions of good cooking for hundreds of thousands in four days: water, fuel, deliveries of food supplies, cooks, servers, dishwashers, and more. The same is true for higher forms of thinking.

First condition: the *arraial* should be spacious enough for unfettered physical movement. To observe, some visitors must stroll about, others stand back. Others are to be seated in the very middle. In any given area, there should always be places for people to sit. There should be sufficient egress, i.e., no certainty visitors will be trapped in crowds, or in any way threatened. Heidegger’s observant thinking requires people to be self-collected (“Memorial” 46–47). The 1919 statement exhorts visitors to “carry themselves with proper respect and deference” (Endnote). Nonetheless, habitually-thinking people, who possess the time-honored virtues of observance and wisdom, may do so even in adverse circumstances. Plausibly, some visitors are not so practiced and want the first condition fulfilled.

Second condition: The *arraial* should consist of diverse areas and occasions in both time and place. This condition enhances the freedom people wish for to observe or contemplate. Madeira feasts bifurcate *arraial* and church: people who are contemplating want to be independent of noisy celebrations. Open door policies enable families and individuals to contemplate according to arrival, departure, and custom. The 1919 statement, for example, announces, “The church is to be opened tomorrow all day” (Endnote). Similarly, different feast areas and occasions allow for a variety of forms

of authority to be observed: in the visitor parking area it is the City of New Bedford at work, in the main stage area in the afternoon it is the *Grupo Folclórico Madeirense* demonstrating traditional dance and song, and in the Courtyard Café at dusk it is the fado singer and accompanying guitarists invoking Lisbon with its fabled hills.

Third: Heidegger's intellectual concern about technology justifies commitment to genuine authorities as a condition. Genuine authorities are participants like Island of Madeira officials, the Church, the City of New Bedford, the *Clube Madeirense*, local universities and schools, and nonprofit organizations—in short, entities with a history and mission that justify deference and in some cases humility. Now, for anyone thinking like Heidegger, there exist entities that appear to be authorities but actually are not. For him, modern technology is among these false authorities; at the mid-century, it is nuclear power and weaponry (“Memorial” 51–52). For him, there are also mundane examples, such as antennae on the roofs of homes (“Messkirch” 43). At the Madeira Feast, a colossal video screen hung over the main stage offers, to some visitors, an authoritative perspective on folkloric dancers and performers. But obscurity coalesces; either technology is in authority or it is the Madeira homeland. According to Heidegger, technology for observant thinking cannot provide a home for us on Earth (“Messkirch” 51). So, falsely authoritative items like *technology* call for “proper use” (“Memorial” 54); at times any item ought to be shut off, and some items, like video screens and cameras, are to be identified and explained.

Enough about conditions. What is needed on the blueprint are focal things, persons, and moments around which visitors may orient and gather in order to observe and to contemplate. Invitations serve those visitors who are not yet habitual thinkers. For Messkirch, the world-famous Heidegger speaking eloquently provides the focus; in the orations, the intellectual defers to the performance of 18th-century musical compositions (“Memorial” 43). For the Madeira Feast, it may be the time-worn toboggan from the Island of Madeira, or the opening ceremony with the mayor and distinguished guests speaking, or Roman Catholic Mass. For intellectuals thinking like Heidegger, focal items situate persons as physical and sentient beings; it is not the artwork nor the person speaking per se, but the unperceived lifeworld inviting observance or contemplation. According to Heidegger (speaking to Messkirch), observant thinking carries a feeling of “gladsomeness” and belonging (“Messkirch” 53, 55). According to St. Thomas Aquinas, contemplating Divine signs carries a sense of intellectual wonder (*Summa* I–II, Q.3, a.8).

Festivities in New England encourage visitors to observe and contemplate. Let us inventory samples of success. Consider first what *arraiais* have always done. Cabral reports that island feast tradition constructs an out-of-doors “sacred experience” (29). New Bedford's Madeira Feast likewise decorates the outer church's alcoves, electric lights, and flag poles with fragrant branches of greenery, all of which, in the warm summer night, may call to mind an arboreal paradise. Opening and closing ceremonies, guest diplomats and clergy speaking, and folkloric performances are additional ways the traditional *arraial* invites higher thought. The Madeira Feast, a descendent of Europe's Feast of Corpus Christi, is distinguished by a street parade of nonprofit organizations and officials. Walking silently in the parade and observing from the sidelines are paradigms of observant conduct.

In recent decades the *Clube Madeirense* has wrought changes refreshing invitations to think. There is the new Museum of Madeiran Heritage, open to the public at all hours during feast days (“Museum”). The museum holds the aforementioned toboggan, once used to transport men and women down the steep slopes of Madeira; observing this particular artifact the lifeworld of Madeira draws near. There is new, ample seating under grape arbors (*latadas*) and additional seating under tented areas allowing for intimate settings and bilingual conversation. For first-time visitors, the legend of the community of immigrants launching the first celebrations may invite observance. One account is given in Madeira Feast literature (“Founding Fathers”). Scholarly research like Cabral's *Tradition and Transformation* shows the earliest feast, Sunday, August 1, 1915 (40–44). New Bedford newspapers

show the world picture: the year prior, hostilities formally begin in Europe. On July 31, Pope Benedict issues the worldwide “fatherly cry for peace.” The *New Bedford Evening Standard* carries the letter on the front-page (“Pope”). One day later, thousands gather in *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*. For the faithful, the *Festa do Santíssimo Sacramento* coinciding with the loving guidance of the Roman Catholic Church may have been miraculous; the people, most solemn. But facts and conjectures are not themselves contemplating; facts and conjectures are matters for experts.

The Madeira Feast arrives in early August. By island tradition, Mass is to take place on the first Sunday of the month (Cabral 1). Some years, feast days are met by storms public science tells us originate from the interplay of thunderstorms, warm ocean waters, and vast columns of heat and moisture rising off the Atlantic at least 5° North of the equator (Holweg 4–6). Multi-colored flags crisscrossed high over Madeira Field flutter in time with ominous urgency. Some realities may be approached by ordinary perceiving; for example, I may look at the bars of clouds and infer that they signal an Atlantic hurricane. For the tradition of philosophy and theology North America inherits from Europe, ordinary knowing is not open to the greater reality. What the Madeira Feast in high summer opens for thinkers is the possibility of observing and contemplating powerful nature. One year and later another, visitors of all ages thinking discover what the global earth is. Higher truths deserve lifelong observing and contemplation. For tradition, contemplating is the heart of flourishing human life (Aquinas, *Summa* I–II, Q.3, a.5).

Learning and Deliberating Festivities

According to Heidegger, some 20th-century visitors observe Messkirch festivities to locate the lost homeland. Independently, Cabral employs concepts of “observance” and “homeland” to answer questions of the Madeira Feast (1, 60–114). Conclusions of Cabral’s field work in New Bedford and Madeira support what the intellectual Heidegger proposed in the 1960s. One objection rises: some visitors attend festivities without an explicit mission to observe the homeland. The goal of course is to have fun and enjoyments. To this objection, the tradition of philosophy helpfully identifies areas of ordinary intellectual activity, i.e., thinking fun and engaging. Ordinary feast activities include meeting new acquaintances, practicing bilinguality, and selecting what area of the *arraial* to visit next. Let us examine the areas of ordinary feast thinking, i.e., learning and deliberating.

Feast learning pursues practical knowledge, such as cooking and embroidery, customs and rituals, identity of persons and organizations, and language learning. We learn by information and directions, by observing models in action, and by hands-on practice. If Aristotle is right, good learning has to be intentional and willing (1105a). At the Madeira Feast, diverse areas of practical knowledge are demonstrated by experts. But any visitor would have to inquire of experts in order to commence learning. For example, it is possible to approach *Grupo Folclórico* performers to inquire about costumes or the meaning of dances, e.g., whether a particular dance represents courtship exercises or an interpretation of human life. But some visitors are reluctant to make inquiries, and the busy *arraial* works against meeting experts. In truth, events designated for learning are needed for learning on the part of visitors. Again, acquiring knowledge must often be hands-on, personal, and fun.

Establishing the Museum of Madeiran Heritage adjacent to Madeira Field in 1999 is a windfall toward visitor learning (“Museum”). The quiet space offers refuge during bright feast days; artifacts, topographical models, and photographs document Madeirans and the 20th-century North End. Docents are on hand to offer interpretations. A published compilation provides family recipes for dishes served in the *arraial* and in Madeiran households. Shared knowledge is new to the four days of the Madeira Feast but customary in other forms of Portuguese-American festivities. Holy Ghost Festivities studied by J. Leal, for example, are conducted in households among persons known to one another (139); the meal sharing Leal describes includes appraisal (133). Similarly, since the millennium

some large festivities conducted by Azorean communities feature booths displaying documents, books, and images of the islands. Nonprofit agents and government officials are on hand to answer inquiries. An intellectual gap is bridged with curious, non-Portuguese visitors and with equally curious descendants.

Feast deliberating is an intellectual activity carried out by expert hosts. Host decision-making may be done well, or excessively, or inadequately. According to Aristotle, deliberating is an intellectual activity about what actions to do in light of what truly fulfills us (1141b, 1142b). For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, deliberating well is an important habit for ethics and morals (1140a–1142b; *Summa*, I–II Q.57, a.5). Given that ordinary, working life pursues deliberative thinking, among the tasks of hosts is to soften decision-making at feast time; this area of thinking is to be enjoyable and available to all persons. For example, good hosts offer a generous *arraial* layout and simple menu choices. One reason supporting the aforementioned argument for appointed parking areas is to diminish hasty decision-making on the part of arriving visitors; with expertise, feast parking could, in time, be fun. On the other hand, if festivities are too planned and plans entrenched, then visitor thinking dissipates into the spectatorship of consumers. In short, what festivities thinking conducts are forms of visitor deliberating between the extremes of hard work and soft consumerism. Not just fun, but good, deliberate fun.

There are promising invitations for good deliberating. The Madeira Feast offers a four-day entertainment schedule and at least ten areas of the *arraial*. Kitchens for different forms of Madeiran cuisine are designated: the outdoor, hands-on grill, the indoor cafeteria of game meats, and *barracas* selling Portuguese feast icons (“Food and Drink”). Contrary to island feast tradition, in which any given feast is to be “distinctive and memorable,” New Bedford pursues *arraial* permanence across the years (Cabral 30). Deliberating about unchanging schedules, *arraial* maps, and menus on the part of visitors dilutes in time to soft consumer decisions. The good deliberating all visitors wish for in festivities requires annual bouts of creativity. For example, entirely new *arraial* configurations are possible in each year. Relocating stages, erecting new structures, and launching *arraial* pilot projects prepare conditions for loyal visitors to deliberate festivities anew. Expert hosts, for their part, renew commitments to discovery. Moreover, festivities reconfiguring themselves offer role models for recalcitrant areas of civil life.

But intellectual activities displace one another. For example, learning about the Azores through video footage is not complementary with observance of the Azores homeland envisioned by intellectuals like Heidegger. To commit to one is often not to commit to the other. For its part, learning allows insights that are partial; if the realities studied are greater than ourselves, the approach invites error. In the decade Madeirans and Azoreans restarted immigration to North America, Pope St. John issued worldwide the encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, or *Peace on Earth* (1963), exhorting social organizations for ethnic groups and also cautioning about erroneous pride (Catholic Church 9–10; 40). Among the causes of pride is an error specific to perception: groups like Madeirans and Azoreans, as everywhere, identify themselves by physical appearance and visible customs. But who Azoreans are and what humanity is are, for philosophy and theology, truths leaping boundaries of ordinary and expert knowing (Catholic Church, *Laudato* 130). So, Heidegger’s observant thinking is by comparison the prudent approach to knowing. On some occasions, compatibility forms among intellectual areas. Let us unfurl one vision of compatibility for festivities thinking: an occasion where areas of intellectual activity may interchange. Remarkably, the Madeira Feast approaches a millennial anniversary shared with an intellectual forum, i.e., scholarly disputation. Moving toward my conclusion, what I argue is the following: improvised, conducted intellectual exchange resolves feast discordances between tradition and innovation. First, let us justify what disputation produces: shared intellectual activity and powerful truth.

Disputation and Festivities

Medieval intellectuals entertained visions of festivities thinking. Seven hundred years before Heidegger's post-war orations, universities in France, Portugal, and elsewhere celebrated Church feasts alongside disputations (Chang 133). The flourishing of *disputatio*, i.e., university disputation, forms with the 13th-century Université de Paris faculty, among whom is St. Thomas Aquinas (Novikoff 134, 164). The star of Aquinas shines across the millennium to Portuguese-American celebrations in New England: the 1264 service composed by Aquinas and the August proclamation of the Pope in Spain launch to all Roman Catholic parishes including Lisbon what is *Festum Eucharistiae*, which became the *Feast of Corpus Christi* (O'Neill 25–44; O'Conner 193); for 15th-century Madeirans, it became the *Festa do Santissimo Sacramento*, and for 20th-century New Bedford, the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament (Cabral 26–27). Some contemporary scholars are uncertain about the authorship of the service ("Corpus" 346). The document composed by Pope Urban IV provides a powerful mission statement (Catholic Church, *Transiturus*). Cabral's *festeiros*, for their part, express disinterest about centuries of feast history (89). What is certain: *quodlibet* disputations, for which Aquinas is remembered, interchange with celebrations of the Feast of Corpus Christi (Edwards 5–6). Let us explore what university disputations add to festive occasions.

Plato's interlocutors in *Politeia* offer intriguing remarks about public disputation (411d, 492–3, 498–9). According to medieval historians, a simple form of university disputation begins in Europe, first as an exercise of law schools; using question and answer procedures, students in forums train for court (Novikoff 91–92; Chang 132). As the story goes, theology faculty adopt a complete form of disputation (132). For them, disputation is used among students and experts to explore intellectual questions of Sacred Scripture in conjunction with non-theological authorities. By the 13th century, all European universities dispute in all areas of learning and for distinguishing scholarly accomplishment (Novikoff 100, 134). Clearly, practices with ancient precedents conducted among nations, institutions, and disciplines vary. Moreover, medieval historians distinguish between various gradations: disputation in classrooms, or *disputatio privata*; those among faculty and advancing students, or *disputatio ordinaria*; and those before large university audiences, or *disputatio quodlibet* (141; Chang 141–143). What is universal throughout medieval higher education is fluent use of Latin: all disputations are spoken in Latin (Chang 137–138).

For us, the appellation *disputation* signifies passionate argument. But what the Latin commitment indicates about the academic exercise is formality: all disputation carries form, and participation by persons is to be formal. Commitments to form diminish quarrel. Moreover, if Plato is right, some formality in intellectual exchanges like disputation precipitates among beginners, experts, and authorities what is truth (499a, 534d). With university disputation, there are four or five moments: an intellectual question is posed, one respondent, or *respondens*, offers an answer informed by study of authority, one or more opponent, the *opponens*, expresses doubts or counter-arguments, and the respondent defends his or her answer in light of objections. All this is conducted by the presiding master, or *praeses*, who afterwards offers the determination, i.e., a summary of arguments and assessment of the response (Chang 132). Again, variations are possible: either the question is given in advance or not, either who is to be respondent is chosen beforehand or on the spot, and either respondent is by rules committed to defending her answer or she may revise in light of objections. In short, there exist variations between scheduled formal disputation and improvised disputation. The distinction I propose clarifies what is thought-worthy about *de quodlibet*, i.e., on any subject (Edwards 3).

In medieval classrooms and degree ordeals, the process is scheduled among a select audience (2; Novikoff 143). Plausibly, in the scheduled version there are few surprises intellectually; questions, objections, and answers are all anticipated. Like contemporaries, medieval students shared preparatory

aids for the usual lot of questions (Chang 146). But among expert faculty with genuine commitments to discovery, i.e., innovative, teaching faculty like Aquinas, improvised approaches promise more (Turrell 146; Edwards 3–4). For medieval scholars, improvising culminates with *quodlibet* (4). In *quodlibet*, the greater university population is invited to ask questions on any subject; faculty and advanced students of the host university serve as respondents and opponents (Novikoff 143). Also, the *quodlibet* in Paris is held off-campus in the city cathedral; again, concurrent with annual feasts (Chang 133–134). In sum, the university population entering off-campus forums on holidays and inviting into its own exercise persons outside the university (themselves willing and ready to participate intellectually) is a remarkable demonstration of collaboration (134; Novikoff 143). *Quodlibetal Questions 1 and 2* of Aquinas show questions asked and improvised responses in the year 1269 (Edwards 5–8). Plausibly, collaboration is empowered by the formality of disputation itself; formality creates conditions for the discovery of truth among persons learning, deliberating, observing, and also perceptively knowing. For some exposed to 20th-century doubts about intellectual formalities, the claim must be justified.

People bring diverse insights and background authorities. For us to pursue intellectual exchange, e.g., for me to learn something from you and for us to accomplish exchange with voluntary consent, it is suitable to allocate roles and distinguish authority sufficiently among us so that what truth we each bring ends up being viewed as truth shared. In short, conclusions formed are not wholly the result of one person's aims; my question brings something to what you provide. Disputations of Aquinas distinguish *praeses*, *respondens*, and *opponens*. As shown in all questions and articles of *Summa Theologiae*, medieval participants invoke compositions of ancient philosophy, of Old and New Testaments, of Church fathers, and of non-European intellectuals. To negotiate across great divergences, participants assuming roles must pursue what are good, scholarly manners, e.g., citations, complete propositions, and restating prior arguments (Pieper 82–85). Accordingly, truth produced is collaborative, nuanced, and unique, i.e., powerful. *Quodlibet* carries power distinctions to the limit: on one side, the university population posing with sincerity any sort of question; on the other, masters representing the summit of learning; at tangents, faculty, advanced students, and beginners; at tangents, diplomats of foreign powers, Church clergy, and society (Novikoff 134). What is puzzling today about the disputation is not as much commitment to formality as the combination of sophisticated, intellectual exchange with Church festivities, e.g., the Feast of Corpus Christi.

According to the 1264 mission statement, *cunctis honorandum studiis*, “all kinds of study” are among fulsome ways Roman Catholic persons may honor the gift of the Savior (Catholic Church, *Transiturus* 195).⁴ Historical examples given in compositions support the insight that the remarkable bond of feast and intellect is not specific to apostolic tradition. When Plato's Socrates is diverted from evening festivities, he joins intellectual conversation in a local estate (328d–e). According to Luke, when Jesus is separated on the occasion of the Passover, the Son of God participates in intellectual conversation in the Synagogue (CEV, 2:46). Again, at the Last Supper, the Apostles engage in philosophical argument about who is the greatest (22:24–27). In medieval universities, disputation's early, secular mission is preparation for law. Plausibly, disputation practices a flourishing, hospitable form of work, i.e., the intellectual work of courts and legislatures. According to Novikoff, intellectual performance contributes to the appeal of disputation (141–144). In short, participants enjoy displays of learning, wit, and intellectual humor. In sum, commitment to intellectual work, the flourish of formal disputation, and moreover the diverse gathering of participants and outside visitors, justify putting on feasts alongside disputations.

⁴ The Spanish version of *Transiturus* inserts “por las más íntimas fibras del alma” in place of the Latin version's “cuncti honorandum studiis” (Catholic Church).

Intellectual Feasts

Quodlibet shows unanticipated kinships with the medieval feast inherited by 20th-century Madeirans: both precipitate in 13th-century Europe alongside European universities, and both commemorate history, observe human authority, and contemplate Divine authority. They practice an identical insight: to go out and bring formal occasions to the public. *Quodlibet* departs the university and enters city cathedrals (Chang 133); *quodlibeta* air practical and intellectual questions affecting the greater community (Edwards 4). Feast procession departs the church building and carries sacred objects in public view (Monks 82). According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, in some localities the Feast of Corpus Christi procession “wended its way through the town and even into the open country” (347). The 1264 statement for what becomes Corpus Christi does not envision processions but does urge that “both clergy and people might rise up and rejoice in songs of praise” (O’Conner 196). Plausibly, creative, 13th-century practices bridge disparate worlds in what are virtuous acts of hospitality, i.e., displaying, inviting, hosting, and being hosted. Given that Cabral and Leal report 20th-century Portuguese-American celebrations carry unsolved discordances, and given the retreat of intellectual exchanges like disputation, acts of hospitality are promising. Transforming *arraiais* and refreshing higher learning are to be accomplished together in one flourish. Let us examine the argument.

Some medieval historians claim the priority of disputation retreats in 18th-century Europe in deference to scientific approaches and printed dissertations; what remains of disputation is its vestige, i.e., the basic defense (Chang 170, 173). But 21st-century academics host conferences and gatherings approaching forms of complex disputation. As in the medieval era, visiting experts and students gather from afar to meet in conference facilities, on campus or off. As before, conference organizers deliberate and calculate ahead of realization: questions, topics, and guests are selected in advance. Participants craft thoughts on paper. At any given conference in any discipline, intellectual exchange is conducted with a view to written text. As with disputation, possibilities of genuine, shared discovery on the part of experts and beginners retreat; observant thinking retreats. North American philosopher A. Rorty argues that late 20th-century intellectual exchange is hindered by abstruse commitments and bad habits (303). Again, Rorty’s claims are not novel to 20th-century higher learning: certain medieval universities with active disputation and feast calendars acquire alarming intellectual habits (Chang 139, 160). Add to the inventory of laments the fact that customs for intellectual exchange are today engineered and fragmented, not universal nor transparent. So, improvised approaches are encouraging—promising new commitments to formality. Aims of intellectual discovery justify fresh efforts in areas of learning and testing (Medeiros “Introducing”).

Cabral’s research on the Madeira Feast explores a similar concern about the retreat of valued tradition; in this case, solemn procession retreats in favor of civic parade (45–46) and the improvised autonomy of *festeiros* gives way to powerful nonprofit leadership, expert in planning and accounting (47–50). Cabral documents retreats with precise facts and dates. Cabral attends *Clube Madeirense* meetings where policies are formally aired (62–68, 117–119); he joins lunch breaks among *festeiros* in which intellectual questions are debated (74). For Cabral, Madeira Feast intellectual exchanges are sincere but inconclusive (119). Like all problems Cabral explores, 20th-century traditions and innovations, for him (as for Heidegger), are tragic, i.e., forms of discordance and, plausibly, crises of mission (90–93, 52). But all discordances Cabral notes are to be explained in light of expertise in the area of hosting, i.e., hospitality. Fieldwork by Cabral shows that hospitality characterizes traditional feasts: the Church parish honoring the patron saint sponsors volunteers who in turn host the *arraial*, which in turn is open to families who conduct *barracas* for outside visitors. For some, commitment to the populous *arraial* is the sore thumb of the 20th century. But the 1919 statement already anticipates “large numbers of outsiders” (Endnote). The 1264 statement envisions *devotas muchedumbres de fieles*, “devout throngs of the faithful” (196; Catholic Church, *Transiturus*).

Remarkably, the history of philosophy carries insights and contributions for what hospitality is (Plato 327–331). Hospitality, I propose, is passed over by intellectuals because in universities and in public forums it is the expertise in assumption. Let us risk a glance to approach solving both higher learning and Madeira Feasts. Late in the 20th century, J. Derrida explored dilemmas of unconditional and conditional hospitality (76–77). For anyone thinking like Derrida, early *festeiros* and the *Clube Madeirense* express unflagging commitments to the unconditional, i.e., hosting everyone and anyone in the *arraial* (“FAQ”). But the mission of festivities is thereby challenged. In New Bedford, visitors enter the *arraial* who also happen to be uninterested in Madeiran immigration or unobserving of solemn worship (Cabral 44–45). Arguments form for what Derrida calls conditional hospitality, e.g., formulating rules, requiring identification, patrolling grounds, surveilling celebrants, and restricting access in order to limit who the visitors are. All aforementioned methods were used by secular hosts of the centennial Madeira Feast (“Venue Safety”). The other horn of the dilemma menaces: methods of conditional hospitality also challenge the mission. For example, some persons who think in *arraiais* observe powerful video technology and security personnel; new prohibitions of large shoulder bags discourage visitors from escorting elderly persons who want portable seating (“Bag Policy”). In philosophy, solving dilemmas like solving discordances first requires locating balance points and areas of duty. For Derrida, the thinking “straddling” divergences of hospitality constitutes hospitality ethics (136).

Duties of any host: ample seating, open entrances and accessible exits, accommodation for dependents, visible guides, hydration and toilets, a differentiated *arraial*, and a well-appointed schedule. Prudent, creative deliberating about host duties may approach conditional hospitality balanced with unconditional hospitality. In short, I ask myself what arrangements offer conditional hospitality without imposing fallible rules and unconditional hospitality without inviting crises? North American philosopher A. Weston, author of *Creativity for Critical Thinkers*, offers guidance in the area of creative, philosophical problem-solving. For example, take well-appointed scheduling. Late-20th-century Madeira Feast performances are scheduled and published far in advance (“Entertainment”). Advance scheduling facilitates coordination among various parties, but scheduling also generates coincidental choices, i.e., blockages and competition, in large crowds. According to Weston, one approach to solving problems is by treating the cause (56). For example, the prudent host sees it is not a host duty to publish the feast schedule in advance and accordingly refrains; as a consequence, visitor arrivals are better distributed over four days. Take excessive drinking. A fallible rule states that visitors may purchase only two alcoholic beverages at once (“Venue Safety”). According to Weston, another creative approach is to implement how other cultures solve the problem (25–26). In this case, scholarly hosts discover how Madeirans serve alcoholic beverages. “Madeiran Rules” are instituted; drinking fulfills the feast’s mission. Similarly, take the *arraial* map. Allocating new areas, forums, and pilot projects serves to diversify what is possible at the Madeira Feast. Unconditional hospitality is pursued because visitors thinking may deliberate and choose, and crowds disperse. But *arraial* enlargements are expensive and require new areas of expertise. According to Weston, difficult problems may be reframed, e.g., one problem is brought to solve another (57). The University of Massachusetts in New Bedford and Dartmouth, with commitments to language learning and the humanities, needs to reach out to communities of Madeirans and Azoreans, among others (“Portuguese”). The Madeira Feast, for its part, needs to conduct informed, fruitful conversations about inclusion and diversity; the *Clube Madeirense*, for its part, wishes to be a good, upstanding neighbor.

Creative solutions recreate hospitality characteristic of the 13th-century and world feast traditions. *Quodlibet* explores questions on any subject whatever. The Feast of the Blessed Sacrament welcomes all outsiders. Inviting is the starting point. One promising project reaching young and old, empowering beginners and experts, are Madeira Feast forums for book readings conducted by universities, colleges, and schools. These may be rigorously scheduled, like the New Bedford Whaling Museum’s *Moby-Dick*

reading marathon, or loosely scheduled (“Annual Moby-Dick”). For example, a title is selected, books are made available at local stores and schools, and for feast days readings are conducted formally by experts and visitors, discussed among groups at leisure, and interpreted by artists. University faculty are persons qualified to locate international literature and stories. Plausibly, better titles offer a background by which to think about festivities, the Island of Madeira, and the City of New Bedford.

Closing

Some conclusions are now elaborated about future festivities. All conclusions point in the direction of festivities thinking. If Plato is right, community gatherings must be hosted and conducted by experts who think in view of the happiness of dependents and who reason in light of the mission. If Professor Heidegger is right, hosted celebrations whose missions are to commemorate and worship must accommodate observant thinking and contemplation, respectively. To Heidegger’s proposal we may add that there are fun, promising areas of feast learning and deliberating that are at times incompatible with higher thinking. If teachers like Aquinas are right, festivities may be embedded with forms of intellectual exchange for which universities and colleges bring hosting and expertise. An intellectual occasion like community book reading enacts commitments to improvising and formality sufficient for intellectual discovery among festive people.

This direction illuminated points beyond thinking to the nature of festivities, i.e., festivities are things of power. Just as city institutions are things of power, so too are hosted celebrations. What this insight means may be interpreted from various approaches: power is immanent in offices and privileges, and power is defined as the resource for diverse actions. To speak philosophically, things of power are ontologically greater than ordinary things. For example, festivities are ontologically more than hosts and groups conducting visitors. What is cherished about festivities by young and old is negotiating depth and complexity, appraising one area of the *arraial* in light of another.

Festivities are things of power. Given that power exceeds anyone of us, for persons to initiate new community projects is to assume approaches that are, in truth, woefully inadequate. One approach to power comes not from philosophy but from theology and religion. According to Pope St. John, writing to citizens worldwide, power carried by organizations is in every case given by God (Catholic Church, *Pacem* 19–21). For Madeirans conducting traditional feasts, the power to host begins with spiritual promises and sponsorship on the part of the Church parish (Cabral 29–30). One approach to carrying Portuguese-American celebrations to future generations is to carry what is a suitable attitude—i.e., that feasts are powerful things, beginning with Divine dispensation.

For some, complicating any sort of powerful thing seems to pursue its destruction. But complexity is characteristic of things of power, like medieval disputation. Tasks, roles, and authority are carved up, allocated. Variants form. Disputation itself propagates throughout Europe. The same is true for festivities. In the 13th century, *Festum Eucharistiae* shoots forth roots and blossoms in many localities as the Feast of Corpus Christi; by the 15th century, the feast as *Santissimo Sacramento* populates parishes of remote Madeira (Cabral 26–28, 133). Immigrants who endure transatlantic crossings bring the feast tradition to New Bedford’s North End. In sum, transforming and complicating things of power pursues flourishing. Moreover, some powerful things flourish only as partitioned, circulated, relinquished, and drawn anew. I propose that this is true of festivals and feasts.

If the argument is cogent, structures of power shaping community gatherings are not to be carried as rigid somethings, enduring as impervious objects. They are to be carried as things of precious life, flexible and revisable. To conclude are proposals for creativity in localities like New Bedford’s Madeira Feast. Some holidays to gather people are not overly scheduled. Better that festivities are tethered to stars, looped to moons. Similarly, feasts may embellish the good habit of stretching the feet and walking—pitch tents in uncelebrated fields. They need not be stored in the very same locality, as

clothing is stored in closets. The possibility of any mission is, first of all, a sincere wish for its fulfillment. What fulfillment is, experts guide us. Each may have his or her own fulfillment. For philosophy, one key (among others) is intellectual activity.

Endnote

“Noticiário” (*Avorada Diária*, Sexta-Feira, 1 de Agosto de 1919)

“FESTA DO SANTÍSSIMO SACRAMENTO. Como preparação para a festa do Santíssimo Sacramento que se realiza proximo domingo na igreja de Nossa Senhora da Conceição desta cidade, principia hoje pelas 8 horas da noite o arraial com vistosa iluminação no largo e ruas adjacentes àquela igreja. O concerto musical, pelas filarmonicas ‘Nacional Portuguesa’ desta cidade e outra de Plymouth-tambem portuguesa, durará até às 11 horas da noite. As ruas estão ornamentadas com arcos de verdura e com as bandeiras das duas nações amigas. Amanhã pelas duas horas da tarde as mesmas bandas postadas nos seus côretos darão novo concerto até às 11 horas da noite com alguns intervalos. A igreja estará aberta amanhã todo o dia e às 7,30 da noite subirá à tribuna sagrada o rev. sr. padre Manual de Sousa Travassos, pastor da igreja do Espírito Santo de Fall River. A festa no domingo começará as 10,45 com missa cantada a grande orquestra, pregando ao Evangelho o rev. sr. padre João de Fontes Ferraz, pastor da igreja de S. Miguel de Fall River. Às 4 horas da tarde sairá a procissão que dará o giro do costume e na qual se encorporarão as confrarias da paróquia com os seus pendões, crianças da primeira comunhão, meninos do côro, clero, Conselho ‘João Gonçalves Zarco’ da Associação Protetora União Madeirense do Estado de California e a respectiva comissão promotora da festa e as filarmonicas. Ao recolher da procissão pregará o rev. sr. padre Francisco Correia Betencourt, cura coadjutor da igreja de S. João desta cidade. Depois do sermão haverá concerto pelas duas filarmonicas até às 10,30 da noite. Como se sabe, os festejos em honra do Santíssimo Sacramento são feitos a expensas do povo madeirense que amavelmente contribue com a sua quota para a realização de tão importantes solenidades. E não nos consta que haja um unico filho da ilha da Madeira que, ao ser entrevistado pelos membros que compõem a comissão, se recuse a contribuir generosamente para tal fim. Oxalá que os festejos corram na melhor ordem e que todos se portem com o devido respeito e acatamento para honra e brio do nome portuguez. A’ ULTIMA HORA. Pelo telefone fomos agora informados de que haverá fogo de artifício amanhã à noite e no domingo, no largo da igreja, esperando-se grande numero de forasteiros de fóra da cidade.”

“News” (*Avorada Diária*, Friday, August 1, 1919)⁵

“FEAST OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. In preparation for the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament that shall take place this Sunday in the Church of Our Lady of Conception of this city, the *arraial* begins today at 8 o’clock at night with eye-catching illumination in the square and streets adjacent to that church. The musical performance, offered by the philharmonic “National Portuguese” of this city and by one other philharmonic from Plymouth, also Portuguese, lasts until 11 at night. The streets are ornamented with arches of greenery and with the flags of the two sister nations. Tomorrow by 2 in the afternoon the same bands positioned in their bandstands are to give a new concert that will last until 11 o’clock at night, with some intermissions. The church will be opened tomorrow all day, and at 7:30 o’clock at night, Rev. Sr. Father M. de L. T., pastor of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Fall River will address the community from the sacred pulpit. The Feast on Sunday is scheduled to commence at 10:45 AM with a sung mass accompanied by a full orchestra. Rev. Sr. Father João de

⁵ Translated by Paul Medeiros, with editing by Pedro Lopes de Almeida.

Fontes Ferraz, pastor of the Church of St. Michael of Fall River will be preaching the Gospel. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon the procession will depart taking the customary route, with the presence of the fraternities of the parish with their pennants, children of the first communion, choir boys, clergy, Counselor J. G. Z. of *A. P. U. Madeirense* of the State of California and the commission in charge of the festivities, as well as the philharmonics. To culminate the procession, the Rev. Sr. Father F. C. B., priest of the Church of St. John of this city, is to preach. After the sermon, there will be concerts by two philharmonics until 10:30 PM. As it is well known, the festivities in honor of the Blessed Sacrament are supported by the Madeiran community, who kindly contributes their share to the realization of such important solemnities. It goes without saying that no single person of the Island of Madeira, being appointed by the members composing the commission, would refuse to contribute generously for such an end. Let us hope that the festivities may run in good order and that all may carry themselves with proper respect and the deference suited to honor and dignify the name of the Portuguese community. AT THE LAST HOUR. By telephone, we are now informed that there will be fireworks tomorrow at night and on Sunday, in the square of the church, and that a large number of visitors from other cities is expected."

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