It's a Jetsons World

Private Miracles and Public Crimes

Jeffrey Tucker

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Preface

ONE MORNING I WAS reading about how in the past many thousands of people died from scurvy, and solely because travelers on the high seas had such limited access to fruit and vitamin C. Scurvy was documented in the ancient world, and, in the 300 years after 1500, may have killed as many as two million sailors. The fear of scurvy has been one of millions of terrifying fears that have consumed the human psyche for all of human history until very recently. Now we know and care nearly nothing about it.

That same morning, I visited a hotel breakfast buffet and there was a display of seemingly unlimited fruit and juice available for everyone, fruit of all types and from all over the world. They were in large carafes with no limit on how much people could pour. My eyes popped out in amazement and I stood thinking of the miracle and its implications, even as everyone else poured up glass after glass of whatever they wanted from the juice bar. I'm quite sure that no one thought anything of it.

What's more, should I find myself with a hankering for fruit wherever I might be traveling, I can pull out my digital device and search for a local store. The navigation tools can get me there from wherever I happen to be. When I get there, I can compare prices with all the other stores to make sure that I get the best deal, and then initiate a video call anywhere in the world and talk about how great the orange I just ate was. Then I can quickly discover the nutritional properties with a search, and even make a video of my feast and post it with a wireless device and that video can be hosted on an external site in minutes, to be watched by all my friends when I link it on a Facebook account—again from a wireless device in my hand—and then this same video can become oddly popular and elicit a million views over the course of a few days. The whole thing is new. None of this would have been possible even five years ago or even twelve months ago.