

## **The Tower**

Nathan Greenebaum

Arendt, Ch. 6

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*"Like the birth in the manger, which spelled not the end of antiquity but the beginning of something so unexpectedly and unpredictably new that neither hope nor fear could have anticipated it, these first tentative glances into the universe through an instrument, at once adjusted to human senses and destined to uncover what definitely and forever must lie beyond them, set the stage for an entirely new world and determined the course of other events, which with much greater stir were to usher in the modern age."*  
(p. 257-8)

The tower was first built in the fertile garden between two rivers. At first, the tower grew tall, and we flourished. But outside the walls the green earth was consumed and turned to desert, and we were scattered.

But the tower did not fall. It was taken with us to the corners of the Earth and built anew again and again. Upon the peak of the tower, a man named Galileo placed a weapon made of wood and glass to pierce the great white belly of heaven, and with this spear the veil of the sky was split.

Our eyes had deceived us. The sky burst like a soap bubble. The Earth was vaulted into the cosmos, spinning unshielded among the gears of the planets. In brilliant whiteness, the shape of the universe was revealed to us; the great beast, beautiful and unfathomable.

At first, we rejoiced. Gazing into the mind of the cosmos, we harvested power greater than we had ever imagined. We reshaped the world around us in an image we believed to be our own.

But then, spurred by the passion of war, in the American desert we devised a way to use the spear against human beings. Two cities vanished in brilliant whiteness.

Our eyes had deceived us. On our tower we speak a language with no words. The spear of Galileo is firmly lodged in the brilliant white hide of the beast with the line twined round our neck, while outside the walls the garden of the Earth turns to desert.

Without the garden we starve, but without the tower we are not human. Our eyes have deceived us, so we must trust our hands. The Earth sails on the oceans of the cosmos, and we, alone, are the crew.