

## No1 神戸大学〔後期〕2015-2

### 〔要約〕

もし、火星で草の葉がたった 1 枚でも見つければ、宇宙飛行管制センターでは有頂天になって、人類が宇宙全域に出ていく構想を発表するだろう。しかし他の、住める可能性のある惑星に生命体を見つけることに心を奪われて、私たちはどういうわけか、この惑星をめっちゃくちゃにすることの言い訳をし、そのことに目をつぶってはいないだろうか?他の惑星にたった1つの微生物を発見できるかもしれないという期待に身を震わせながらも、その足元で、私たちは自らの意志で大規模な絶滅行為を行っている。環境保護の鍵となる一線を越えずに正しい側にとどまることで、生物圏の産業規模での開発の帳尻を合わそうとする試みは、すべて失敗に終わろうとしている。たとえば、森林認証制度は森林環境の悪化の速度を緩めるのに何の役にもたっていない。アポロ計画が行われていたとき、私はまだ幼い子供であり、宇宙空間の探索に心を奪われるのはわかる。おそらく、宇宙探査で得られる最大の賜物は、そのおかげで私たちは自分たち自身を孤島の惑星だと見なすことができ、この惑星で一番感嘆すべきものは私たちの身の回りの世界—生き物同士の関係—さらには私たち自身の中にさえ見つかるということだ。1917 年のヨーロッパの激動のさなか、獄中での寒く暗い夜に、革命的社会主義者のローザ=ルクセンブルクは、自らの危険極まりない状況にもかかわらず、生命力が持つ不思議さと美しさに気づいて、精神が高揚するのがわかった。彼女の心は「想像もつかないほどの未知なる精神的喜びで高鳴る」のである。彼女は、その秘密とはきっと「生命そのものに他ならない」と思い、守衛の靴のかか音が外の砂利を踏みしめる音の中にさえ、「そこには、ささやかで愛おしい命の歌がある—その聞き方を知ってさえいればの話だが」と思うのだ。



If they found on Mars a single blade of grass there would be ecstasy at mission control center, releasing visions of humanity spreading out across the cosmos. But does the obsession with finding life on other, potentially inhabitable planets somehow  
5 excuse and blind us to the trashing of this one?

News of the discovery of yet another Earth-like planet fuels the fantasy that if we damage our own, we can always relocate. There is a strong fascination with the possibility of escape which somehow relieves the pressure to look after our own, extraordinary  
10 planetary home.

As we tremble with anticipation at the prospect of finding a single microorganism on another planet, under our feet we're wilfully executing a mass extinction event. Once a fashionable cause, threats to our forests, which are cradles to the diversity of  
15 life, have been largely forgotten. But this century we've been losing them at the astonishing rate of 50 football pitches per minute. That's an area the size of Greenland since the turn of the millennium.

All attempts to reconcile the industrial-scale exploitation of  
20 the biosphere by staying the right side of key environmental thresholds are failing. Forest-certification schemes\*, for example, have done nothing to slow their degradation. Why do we treat the abundance of life on our doorstep with such disrespect, when it throws up glories like the Namibian fog-basking beetle, which  
25 taught us how to build green houses in the desert? Or the bark

beetle, which can detect a forest fire 10 km away and is showing how to make better fire extinguishers? Even worse, the very people who put their lives on the line to protect land and the environment are being killed at an accelerating pace.

30 I was an infant when the Apollo program was happening and understand the obsession with exploring outer space. But sending a single person to the hostile, dry environment of a planet just next door like Mars would require years of training for a fabulously expensive trip. The question of whether or not there is life “out  
35 there” is often asked. But, from a different view of the cosmos, aren’t we ourselves also and already “out there?”

Perhaps the greatest gift of space exploration is that it enabled us to see ourselves as an island planet, where the greatest wonder is to be found in the world around us — the relationships  
40 between living things — and even within ourselves. A single tablespoon of soil contains more micro-organisms than there are people on the planet.

We sense we’re living through hard times, and that makes the idea of fleeing to other worlds attractive. But times have been  
45 harder. On a cold dark night in prison during the upheaval of Europe of 1917, the revolutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg\* found her spirits lifted, despite her perilous situation, by an awareness of the strangeness and beauty of the force of life. Her heart “beats with an inconceivable, unknown inner joy.” The secret,  
50 she decides, is “nothing but life itself,” and even in the sound of guards’ heels grinding in gravel outside, “there is the small, lovely

song of life — if one knows how to hear it.”

A couple of years ago I saw for the first time at dusk a field of fireflies. They were all around me, pulsing, drifting, lighting-up  
55 the darkening landscape. I thought of Luxemburg’s song of life, and of the millions of people around the world who, rather than dreaming of escape, don’t accept the world as it is, but use their life’s energy to protect and improve it.

注 forest-certification schemes 森林認証制度。環境に負荷の少ない方法で管理された森林から産出する木材を認証する国際的プログラム。

Rosa Luxemburg ローザ・ルクセンブルク(1871－1919)。ドイツの革命家，政治理論家。