The dream of colonizing Mars, which has long been a source of inspiration for science fiction, is now close at hand, scientists and entrepreneurs say. Some issues still need to be addressed, though,one of them being the cost and conditions of the return trip. In a column published in the NYT on September 1, 2009 L.M. KRAUSS, from, Arizona State University, comes up with the most simple , radical solution of all, why bother about a return trip when a single ticket would suffice  and be the cheapest option ?

According to M. KRAUSS, deciding whether to send humans to Mars is actually quite straightforward, one simply has to consider the motivation behind the trip. If the goal is space exploration and scientific research then manned vessels are redundant.There is little that humans can do that machines cannot, even human-like robots like Robotics’Sofia. Unmanned research vessels are far cheaper as machines do not require shielding to protect them from radiations of the Sun’s cosmic rays and more efficient as they are not susceptible to the physical effects of weightlessness or the mental stress of being cut off from home. Indeed,the physical and mental health risks of prolonged space travel are so high that it seems laughable to even consider sending astronauts to Mars.

So why are humans so desperate to set foot on Mars ? Is it the same reason that pushes us to climb the hightest mountains, or are we aiming to colonize other planets, to send the human race out into space to ensure its survival ? As Mr KRAUSS points out, if our ultimate goal is to colonize Mars then why bother bringing the astronauts home ? This would dramatically reduce the cost of a Mars missions.According to Mr KRAUSS, Elon MUSK’s Mars One Project aims to establish permanent Mars base in the coming years, bringing down costs through their reusable Big Falcon Rocket. State-funded agencies such as NASA could not fly in the face of public opinion by sending their astronauts on a one-way trip to Mars, one only need consider the public reactions portrayed in the movie ‘The Martian’ to understand that this is simply inconceivable. In contrast , when E MUSK called for volunteers for his permanent Mars settlement in 2013, he made it clear that the risk of fatality would be high and that most would never return to Earth but still over 202,000 aspiring Martian settlers applied.

It would appear that space exploration is not purely a financial question. However expensive a manned Mars mission may be, humans still dream of visiting the Red Planet. Many may argue that the billions of dollars necessary to colonize Mars would be better spent tacking climate change and cleaning up our own planet but this does little to stem enthousiasm in projects like Mars one . Who knows , maybe on our journy to make the Red Planet habitable for humans we may discover a way to better inhabit our own Blue Planet.