

Amongst many, I am certainly not the first in jotting down some reflections about Mars. Mars is actually quite a cool destination, and the most promising one after our Moon. Less cool is that in fact it is currently the only realistic one: other planets and moons in our solar system are simply too far away, too hot, too cold, have too much gravity and so on - our abilities to cope with these of course will eventually change and, in the future, we will fly further away. However, for the moment it's Mars for us - and it's ok.

Why is everybody, or at least many, crazy for going to Mars? Even though it is not a difficult task to figure out major obstacles such as the solar radiation on Mars which is like a permanent super overdose compared with a full day in the sun or flying at high altitude.

I understand it, at a first glance, as a mere projection, heated by the planet's red colour. Stimulated by that invisible human gene urging us to always go beyond, at any cost, and cutting off the branch we are sitting on, we are fascinated with Mars as a land to walk in and settle down.

Yet it's such a beautiful projection – starting off with re-usable Space X rockets, effortlessly landing there, capturing energy through solar panels, melting ice for accessing natural resources, and 3d-printing all what is necessary. All this maintained and operated by fabulously powerful AI.

And then we will terraform Mars through several decades, from iron dusty red over to oceanic blue, and to Amazonas green. And what else to be done, after modifying Mars? We will fly to the next promising planet, years away, of course. Meanwhile, most likely some of the Mars early explorers will not return to Earth. It will be a harsh life there, in the dust with a tiny bit of oxygen – but ultimately it will turn into an exploited American-Chinese commodity mainstream space.

However, there is some disappointment: turning Mars into a liveable planet will take more than a century. Interstellar ships are well featured in the books of our dreams but not in their hangars yet. Interplanetary stations and cruise ships might be feasible in a few decades, but for the moment Earth 1.0 will be our main star ship in the universe.

Indeed, many people would agree that there is room for improvement here. In our extended world, which in its current form is about 35 years old, 'globalisation' is still in the making to be harmonised with and into our daily ways. Current climate change will affect more humans than ever before. And in the worst case, following the five big mass extinctions of Earth's history there will eventually be a new catastrophe. Not for being fatalistic, but to recall that with 7 billion people we are turning big wheels for our little planet.

Because, indeed, we are unprecedentedly numerous and bound for growth as number-one paradigm, our current human actions – and already our mere existence - are inducing climate and other natural changes that will affect millions of humans, and all living species.

So now we want to go to Mars. Accompanying dreams to set sail aiming one day at other solar systems beyond Mars, the main speak is about extension of human territory and access to further potential natural resources. Tech and mining companies are already preparing the exploitation of Mars, and regional governments wrap in their national flagpole, to be driven into the ground upon arrival on that red dry earth.

How will it be then, our Mars 'habitation'? First it will be a struggle for survival and then - a struggle for more. All what is dangerous, tedious, impossible or partially abandoned by humans, will be operated by Artificial Intelligence; up to the point that AI(s) will primarily run Mars. We will call them Marsai(s). As more dependences will emerge, you can expect conflicts about best landing spots, power supply, state claims and shelter. Are we going to have weapons on Mars? Moving to Mars will not make humans a nice race: we will fight, be greedy, cruel and opportunistic.

Now if we go from Mars 1.0 /survival/ over Mars 2.0/exploitation/ to Mars 3.0 /tourism and settling/, is this a sexy perspective? What is the purpose of living in a desert? Loneliness, emptiness, mediation between sandstorms while gazing in a starry non-polluted sky? I feel if we do just this, it is intellectually boring, and we should directly fly further away.

Let's imagine for a moment that we only fly to Mars for 'flying back' to Earth. Mars as a true large-scale pilot and playground for exploring romantic ideas of space, existence and nirvana. Going for reverse expansionism - mastery of difficulties and the unexpected, creating an alternate version of humanity and reimport it to Earth. Mars as a field of experimentation under extreme conditions, not as a defenceless mining field and polluted area to the extreme. Mars as a 'terrain' where cultures prevail, but not nations. Mars where growing does not mean more at the outside, but richer and experienced at the inside with a connection to the other. Mars without colonisation but coexistence. Probably this is enough...

Are we aware of the potential transformation humans through the necessary advanced technology use? For existence on Mars, we need to develop and put into operation some powerful AI, which will have an influence on our, at least at the beginning, artificial life. And we do not know what the one or more AIs are going learn and if they might even turn against Earth. For survival purposes and being efficient, technology for augmented humans focuses on physical, cognitive, and perceptual augmentation of beings through digital technologies. At a lower level bodily transformation will occur through increased radiation and less gravity. Maybe Mars-born individuals cannot leave Mars and live on Earth without (re-)adaption.

Ultimately our consciousness will change, our beliefs and fear for good and bad. What will be the power of mystery in the sense the sacred was where fear and respect for the whole induced a certain behaviour? Mystery linked to spirituality for a way of growth and transformation with and for new existences. Mystery again for respect and defence of nature and love for humanity and all creatures and existences. For a life beyond consumption and defiance of entropy...