

Hugo gave progress a sort of symbolic form in what he called the "aeroscaphé," from the Greek *aero* ("air") and *skaphê*, ("boat"). Or as Hugo put it, "one day travel through space will take place in air-ships, which we will call aeroscaphes, based on our mania for Greek terms." The vessel itself differed on many counts from what eventually came to pass, but his conception of interstellar flight was prophetic indeed.

For Hugo, triumphing over gravity was an ultimate human goal, a physical illustration of freedom from the chains that bind. Over and beyond the technological specifics which were obviously yet to be worked out in his day, Hugo's aeroscaphé was a vehicle of moral and spiritual liberation.

**"It rises with ease over every cloud
Calmly at a level glide,
Before the vision of the spheres
That makes the mysteries explode,
Each a fire of an abyss, and all reveal
Enigmas by their light.**

**Andromeda twinkles, Orion beams,
Sirius opens its jaws.
The Pleiades swarm and expand,
Arcturus, the golden bird gleams
In its nest, and the hideous Scorpion
Spurs Sagitarius to rise.**

**The aeroscaphé has a view from on high
Of Aldebaran dazzled by Cepheus,
The polar chariot's axles of spinning fire
And Perseus spraying wakes of light,
All closer than the Milky Way's glimmer
In the dark skies' nest of hornets**

**Towards the terrific suns' demeanours
On open wings it soars.
It looks like this powerful, superb
Vessel singing through the horrors
Of red space, heard in the ether's orbs,
Is heading for these stars!"**

"Full Sky", "Legend of the Centuries" XIV, Twentieth Century, 1859 edition.

PROGRESS