It is probably obvious to all teachers that a sense of progress is an essential point that must be developed in children from the earliest age. Indeed, it is the necessary lever which enables the child to undertake with constancy the difficult task of educating himself.

It is certain that careful research on this subject would not fail to contribute numerous elements on which to work and reflect. But it is for each one, according to his own needs, to unravel the thread and from it to work out an application. For research to be fruitful it must be sustained by questions that occupy and stimulate us.

Even so, we can approach certain elements of this subject and try to give the beginning of a response.

There are numerous aspects to progress and we can approach them in many different ways depending on our nature and the state of being we are in. Even the cells of the body can participate in this movement of conscious progress.

It is in the education of the vital that the sense of progress must be given priority. It is very clear, and experience repeatedly shows, that when an adolescent has to respond to the pressures of the lower nature, if he does not have within himself the sense of a higher life, of an ideal to manifest, he will become the plaything of forces and the slave of their
claims. We can never insist enough on this point. Sri Aurobindo writes in "The Human Cycle" that the mentality of the barbarians "tends to reappear in the human being in the atavistic period of boyhood..." To build and develop a sense of progress in children is a necessity because for them it will be a safeguard.

The mastery and perfection of character, the change of ordinary nature into something larger, more vast and more perfect should be taken up as early as possible as an inner work. This difficult and complex task can only be done with the constant help and support of a sense of progress.

Mother gives some indications of how the sense of progress can be awakened in young children:

"There is no absolute evil, but an evil, a more or less partial disequilibrium. This may be taught to a child in a very simple way; it may be shown with the help of material things that an object will fall if it is not balanced, that only things in equilibrium can keep their position and duration.

There is another quality which must be cultivated in a child from a very young age: that is the feeling of uneasiness, of a moral disbalance which it feels when it has done certain things, not because it has been told not to do them, not because it fears punishment, but spontaneously.

... If a child as not been spoilt by its milieu, by deplorable examples around it, that is, if it is in the normal state, spontaneously, without its being told anything, it will feel uneasiness when it has done something against the truth of its being. And it is exactly upon this that later its effort for progress must be founded.

There is only one true guide, that is the inner guide, who does not pass through the mental consciousness.

...That is why I insist upon this, and I say that from their infancy children must be taught that there is an inner reality — within themselves, within the earth, within the universe — and that they, the earth and the universe exist only as a function of this truth, and if it did not exist the child would not last, even the short time that it does and that everything would dissolve even as it comes into being.

...It is not a question, of course, of giving a child philosophical explanations, but he could very well be given the feeling of this kind of inner comfort, of satisfaction, and sometimes, of an intense joy when he obeys this little very silent thing within him which will prevent him from doing what is contrary to it. It is on an experience of this kind that teaching may be based. The child must be given the
impression that nothing can endure if he does not have within himself this true satisfaction which alone is permanent.\textsuperscript{5}

When we speak of progress, of course we speak of what can be called conscious progress. Because in a world where there is evolution, everything participates in progress — whether it wants to or not, whether it knows it or not. The sense of conscious progress is an inflexible determination to go forward, to change defeat into victory, the impossibilities of today into the possibilities of tomorrow, and all this in the light of a higher ideal which will find its source in the deepest part of oneself. It is an irresistible march forward towards the heights of our being, towards the constant growth of our capacities. Then we become responsible for our acts and our lives. We are not affected because each event and each circumstance becomes an open door to perfection. This perfection has no end, and on the way, it becomes the deeper and irreplacable sense of our life on earth.

We can also ask ourselves where can we find the source of the sense of progress in the being, from which centre comes the influence that pushes us to make the effort to change, inspite of all the apparent impossibilities?

"The idea of progress belongs to the intelligent will which is active only in very few who are in contact with their psychic being..."\textsuperscript{4}

Thus, the sense of education is shown to us very clearly: to develop and maintain a sense of progress in the child, it is necessary to remain in contact with one's inner being; with one's intimate truth. This truth will be the sure guide that will permit the child to discern the quality of the influences which he constantly meets and to answer to the impulses which will pass through him, often suddenly and in an irresistible manner; and it is from this source that the child will receive the response that is suitable to his effort to progress.

Of course, depending on the case, the situation, and the expectations of the children and the educators, there will be possibilities to build up the sense of progress in our school and the field of education. The need to take up this work is real and important. Everything in our attitude and in the environment of our schools should be turned towards this goal and towards expressing this ideal.

From experience, educators know that example is the best way to communicate to children. The force of example is the true dynamic that can overcome all barriers because it will be understood by everyone
without superfluous words, even with no words at all. A sense of progress has to be lived by those who have the responsibility to awaken it and instill it in children.

"There is yet another aspect of progress that will be victorious over all obstacles, the aspect that will propel humanity into a new realization, open the doors unto a new world, enable not only a select few to benefit from the divine realization, but through their influence, their example and their power, bring a new and better condition to the rest of humanity."

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The sense of progress by a child of 12
A moment comes when we face a wall, when we are in front of a fundamental impossibility. Everything stops. We cannot go further. And yet, more than ever, there is an urgent need to go on, to go forward.

To stop is impossible, even more so to retrace one's steps.

Thus, the path of conscious progress opens before us.

This path is known by no other sign than a need inflamed by the impossibilities that it constantly meets. This path has no other sense than to try and to try again, and again...

It is a stark, austere path — the path of the warrior, and we are constantly defeated.

Nevertheless, it is the only way possible.

So, we must advance into the unknown, walk on nothingness, tread upon ground that does not yet exist and to which only our going forward can give birth; we must cast off all the old ways to make ourselves able to take this step — perhaps.

There is only one question: how to accomplish the necessary progress, the indispensable progress for our march forward on the path of perfection. This can be as painful as something being wrenched out, or it can be like the lifting of a weight at the end of an attachment. Everything depends on what resists.

It is a path without self compacency, nevertheless it is warm like a mother, full like a grace. We are on the way. The wall has fallen.

At times, almost as if as a tangent, we see that some progress has been made, that we are going forward. And yet it is in vain and of little satisfaction, because what is needed is to go on still further.

When one accepts the constraints of the Spirit and when to unite with It becomes the only important thing, then the way becomes glorious, although precarious and exhausting.

Days pass, years pass, maybe lifetimes. To reach the end of one day, to reach the end of one night becomes the only aim of our efforts, our sole ambition.

Apart from that, all the rest...
This is usually what we call life, but it is only a turning around without end, with no real sense; it is a tenacious illusion made up of tiny bits that take up too much space. There is nothing that can pretend to be.

Progress is the shattering of this iron circle, the breaking of this apparently all powerful spell that subjugates us.

Progress is to go towards the future, it is to steer ourselves, even if with difficulty, towards the Great Harbour with the soul as our compass. And yet, we do nothing.

We feel an unyeilding pull towards an "elsewere", the necessity of an "otherwise", the urgency of a life that wants to live and that remorselessly bursts apart our carapace. Then we really go somewhere and we move forward for something.

And it pushes, it pushes. It pushes like a seed that breaks through its outer coating to grow towards the sun.

It insists like the sea that continually breaks against the rocks on the shore with a flood of generous waters until they become the sand of the beach. There is a powerful force at work; this irresistible force is the ferment of the Future. Let us push in harmony with Her, let us unite with Her.

Indeed, the raison d'etre of our life, the life on earth, is the surpassing of ourselves, the breaking of our limits, the conscious abandoning of and delight with what is presented to us, even if we do not yet understand.
This is a teacher's comment on the significance of the sense of progress in education:

Why is the sky blue?
Why is the earth round?
Why am I alive?
Why do I suffer?
Why do I die?

The alert questions of a child.
These questions are precise and fundamental.
But the question is simple if we want to go with him to its roots.
It is this question that is with him everyday, more or less consciously, that makes the seconds beat, that pulls the thread of his life.

What response to give?
We shouldn't be in a hurry.

It is good to give this question space to grow, to create in itself and by itself the true lever: the need for an answer.
And certainly the answer must be like the question: fundamental, alive, prodigious.

What response to give?
Even if the answer is multiple, it is unique.
It is multiple because it must beat second after second, in the same rhythm as the question.

The response for which the child waits, the rhythm of life which he needs to advance step by step, the real lever that will answer his needs — what is it?

What response to give?

But what is the question?
Yes, let's have a good look at the question.
We can formulate it like this: "What is the real meaning of all this?"
This is the question.
It is a heart that beats and that wants to know the sense of the movement, the sense of the deep rhythm.

What is the meaning of life on earth, of this human drama? The child knows this drama, because humanity is One. The child confronts the lost response day after day.

What response to give?
How to transform this drama into an intensity of being.
How to metamorphose this prolonged wondering into recognition.

The child knows this drama — because he hasn't forgotten everything — we only have to help him to remember.

This response is his only solution, and it is also ours.

In education, the sense of progress is a unique and profound reality: a golden lever.
Without a sense of progress, education is impossible, useless and empty.
Without a sense of progress, what is there in life?

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1 On Education, 14 January 1972
2 The Human Cycle (SABCL Volume 15), p 67
3 Questions and Answers, 8 January 1951
4 On Education, 5 July 1961
5 Mother's Agenda, June 1958