

—— A resource for pupils

and teachers

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published by Mount Anville Sacred Heart Education Trust March 2019

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This teaching and learning resource is a sister publication to Discovering Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne – The woman who prays always, also published by Mount Anville Sacred Heart Education Trust.

Madeleine Sophie Barat was the Founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart, now a global organisation with a presence in forty-one countries.

There is much written and many resources available on Sophie. This resource for teachers and pupils aims to capture her character and courage as an educational pioneer and as a highly effective leader.

She experienced the turmoil and violence of French Revolutions and faced frequent opposition from Church and state and, sometimes, from members of her own community.

By contemplating on her story, our pupils will gain insight into the social and political realities of her time as well as an appreciation of her personal qualities – her courage, resourcefulness, leadership and spirituality. She was complex in many ways but absolutely certain of her belief in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the bedrock of her spirituality.

The Four Calls of the Chapter of the Society of the Sacred Heart 2016, for us to 'live more humanly', 'to embrace silence', 'to cross new frontiers', and 'to become one body', are all reflected in Sophie's story.

A Note for Teachers

The Activities listed after each section are intended to be used as indicated i.e. as questions or topics that can be put to individuals or groups and also used for discussion or debate topics. There are also many cross-curricular possibilities associated with the material, especially in the history, geography and social areas. These provide the opportunity for different learning modes such as 'inquiry based' and 'cooperative learning'. For example, pupils might be asked to carry out research on Revolutionary France and write an essay, complete a project or discuss findings. In cooperative mode, pupil groups might be asked to read different sections of the publication. Then a representative of each group would 'teach' the other groups what has been learned.

There is also an opportunity to explore the contents in the context of the five Goals of Sacred Heart education, Faith, Intellect, Character, Community and Social Awareness, and any of the above-mentioned methods can be adopted.

Relevant readings

Discovering Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne – The woman who prays always

www.heritageandhorizon.ie/ resources/st-philippine

The following, which were gratefully used to inform this document, will be enjoyed by teachers and pupils who wish to explore Sophie's story in more detail.

My Own Vintage by Phil Kilroy rscj

http://madeleinesophiebarat.org/ my_own_vintage

Madeleine Sophie Barat, 1779-1865 A Life, Phil Kilroy rscj, Cork University Press "More is gained by indulgence than by severity."

Soxkie

"Five goals of Sacred Heart Education: Faith, Intellect, Character, Community and Social Awareness."

Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat Her story...



St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, painting by Mother Margaret Mary Nealis, RSCJ (Sault-au-Recollet)

"To suffer myself, and not to make others suffer."

A premature birth

On the night of December 12, 1779, a blazing fire was engulfing houses in the village of Joigny in Burgundy, France. As the fire drew nearer to her house, Madame Madeleine Fouffé Barat was terrified. She was pregnant with her third child and the stress caused her to go into labour two months before her full term. The premature baby, born at 11 pm that night, was weak and fragile and so, was baptised the next morning in the local church. The little girl survived and is now recognised all over the world as St. Madeleine Sophie Barat. She is remembered with affection as 'Sophie'.

Sophie lived through violent times, a time of revolutions and a time when European countries were engaged in almost constant warfare. In her own country violence, turmoil and social disruption occurred throughout her lifetime.

She spent 65 years of her 86-year life leading, arguably, the most innovative educational community of its time. Seen now as a pioneer, this complex and often troubled woman, the writer of 14,000 letters, struggled with outer obstacles and inner doubt for most of her life.

This is her story.

Early life

Sophie was from a comfortable and respected family whose ancestors had lived in Joigny for centuries. Her father, Jacques was a vine grower and cooper and would have been held in high esteem locally. Sophie had an older sister, Marie-Louise and a brother Louis who was more than eleven years older than Sophie. He is said to have been a very serious boy and a brilliant student, taught by a private tutor at home. Sophie benefitted from Louis' teaching talents. She learned Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, History and Natural Science. Very few young girls would have received such a level of education at that time.



The stained glass window commemorating Sophie's baptism in the Church of San Thibaut where she was baptised.



Eugène Delacroix, Le 28 Juillet. La Liberté guidant le peuple.

In the context of Sophie's young life, it is important to realise that the Barat family were Jansenist Catholics, as were many people in the Burgundy region at the time. This strict form of Catholicism attracted Louis but caused serious issues for Sophie. Troubled by the Jansenist views on a punishing God and sinful human race, she seems to have been intuitively linked to the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and its relationship with the love of God. She never forgot the pain and inner conflict she suffered from this clash of ideas.

However, as a young girl, Sophie also learned many other things. Her father taught her how to grow and manage the vines and how to make the barrels. She particularly enjoyed working on the land but also became a skilled house manager under the tutelage of her mother. At the age of twelve, when her mother was ill Sophie even managed the family's financial accounts. At this point in her life the French Revolution was well under way.

Troubled times

The public disturbances leading to the French Revolution (1789-1799) had seriously commenced in 1787. Having already taken some control over church properties, in 1790 Government passed the *Civil Constitution of the Clergy (Constitution civile du clergé)*, forcing priests to swear allegiance to the new state. Louis, training to become a priest, took the oath but renounced it when the Pope condemned the Constitution. He left Joigny to avoid the local authorities and went to Paris but was eventually arrested there. He spent two years in prison and only escaped execution through the influence of a friend.



Ann Davidson, RSCJ, a California-based icon artist, has depicted the first meeting of Sophie and Philippine in Grenoble.

children. This social innovation provided an education to pupils who, otherwise, would probably not have any.

In 1806 Sophie was elected Superior General for life. She was only 26 and it is not long before she faces serious challenges.

Overcoming obstacles

Soon after she was appointed Superior General, a conflict of opinion occurred about the way the Society was governed. Some members did not accept Sophie's authority or accept devotion to the Sacred Heart. This conflict continued for some years and would have caused great stress for someone in Sophie's leadership position.

She must have been reminded of this many years later (1839) when there was a serious difference about the revision of the Society's Constitution. The French bishops and the government were opposed to the changes by which Sophie wished to model the Society on the organisational structures of the Jesuits.

The French monarchy was restored in 1815. Government by the new regime enabled the Society to use the Sacred Heart name and the Society began to expand further in France. Then, in 1818, Philippine Duchesne and others set out on their famous journey to Louisiana to set up the first Sacred Heart School outside France. Over the next years the Society founded convents and schools in many other countries including Algeria, Belgium, England, Holland, Italy, Ireland and Spain.

One of Sophie's recognised innovations is the development of a standard course of studies for the entire network of Sacred Heart schools. These studies were designed to educate young women, cultivate them intellectually, emphasise devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and encourage commitment to good deeds in God's name.

Sophie realised that a widespread international network would not be managed easily without a sense of unity.

He returned to Joigny but soon went back to Paris, and took Sophie with him in order to continue her education. They lived in a safe house where Louis continued to teach Sophie and three other young girls. For five years Sophie lived in Paris working as a seamstress and embroidress. She also taught the catechism in secret to children. In the autumn she would return for a while to help with the vine harvest. During her time in Paris Sophie had ambitions to join the Carmelite Order. Then, in 1800, Sophie met with Fr. Joseph Varin, a Jesuit priest.

Birth of the Society

Fr. Varin was trying to develop a women's order that would be involved in the education of young women and devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Sophie was appointed superior of the new organisation, known publicly as Women of Faith or Ladies of Christian Education. At that time, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was illegal in France so they had to take care when naming the new organisation.

Their first school opened in 1801 in Amiens, northern France. A school providing education to the poor people of the town was also opened. Sophie made her vows in 1802 and was also appointed Superior. At this point, Sophie was just 23.

In 1804, the Visitation Convent at Sainte-Marie d'en Haut in Grenoble was incorporated into the Society. The meeting between Sophie and one the nuns there, Philippine Duchesne, has become an iconic incident in the Society's history. A third school was opened in Poitiers.

The Society's objective was to develop a wide network of schools. In most locations, two kinds of schools were established. There were boarding schools for those who could afford them and free day schools for poorer

The steps Sophie would have ascended in order to enter Ste. Marie d'en Haut and the doorway through which she met the welcoming Philippine.



Accordingly, in 1826, she asked for, and got, a 'decree of approbation' from Rome. This was a form of licence allowing her to undertake the actions necessary to achieve her objectives. Schools are opened for handicapped students, orphan students and for boys, spreading the social reach of the Society's vision.

A woman of her time

When thinking about Sophie, it is important to recognise the culture and social norms of the time in which she lived. It was a time that was ripe for new ideas, especially those that supported the reform of society. However, these reforms did not include any recognition of women. Indeed, women were not referred to in publications such as Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), even though the document had a worldwide influence on the development of democracy. Following this, the Napoleonic Code (1804) established the supremacy of a man over his wife and children, even giving a minor more rights than a woman. We must also bear in mind that in addition to the 1798 Revolution, Sophie also experienced the July Revolution of 1830 and the Revolutions of 1848. It was against this background of violence and uncertainty that Sophie, an intelligent and sensitive woman, said to have been 4 ft and 1 inch tall, developed and realised her vision. Interestingly, there are no photographs to show her stature or other physical qualities. Although early photography, as we

know it, was in use then, she would not allow any photos to be taken. Neither would she allow artists to paint her live portrait.

Her travels and letters

To communicate with her widespread community Sophie travelled all over France and to other countries such as Italy, Belgium and Sweden. She had to travel by horse driven coach and such journeys could take weeks. She also visited Rome by sea and went to England once. It seems that she found trips to be relaxing and re-energising. She enjoyed the freedom of being out in the countryside and the opportunity to meet different people.

Sophie wrote the astounding number of 14,000 letters in her lifetime. They were severely censored during the process of her canonisation but have since been restored and now rest in the Society's archives. She has been described as being blunt, persistent, ruthless and caring. Her letters support many of these descriptions. However, she often explains, with great care, why she is saying what she is saying. She always encourages and points out the road to improvement.

Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat died in Paris on 25th May 1865. At that point, resulting from her leadership, the Society had 3,359 members in 89 houses (64 in Europe, 20 in the USA and Canada, 2 in Cuba, and 3 in South America). A magnificent legacy.

Activities related to Sophie's story

These activities may be used as questions to individuals or groups or as discussion or debate topics.

- . Why is Sophie considered to be a pioneer of education?
- II. How would you describe Sophie's vision for the Society of the Sacred Heart? What was she attempting to achieve?
- II. Identify, by research, some of the reasons for the revolutions that took place in France in Sophie's lifetime.
- IV. Sophie travelled by horse drawn coach and communicated many times by post. Find out by research:
 - When the first steam engine rail service became available in France and in Ireland
 - When the first telephone service became available in France and in Ireland
- V. Sophie introduced a common curriculum to be used in all the Society's schools. Can you suggest any reason why she would have done this?

Do any of the elements in Sophie's story remind you, in any way, of the five Goals of Sacred Heart Education: Faith, Character, Intellect, Community and Social Awareness?

Leadership

"Your example, even more than your words, will be an eloquent lesson to the world."

Sophie as Leader

As Superior General, Madeleine Sophie Barat, was leader of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart community for nearly 65 years. She remained leader in spite of many setbacks, disagreements and disappointments. The disagreements were sometimes with the Church but also often with her own colleagues. Nevertheless, she remained in office for an extraordinary period of time, guiding her Community as it spread from country to country. By any measure she must be considered to have been a very successful leader.

What is a leader?

In Sophie's time well-known leaders were usually military generals, high level politicians or high level male religious leaders. Napoleon's strategies and tactics are still studied in military circles. In later times, commencing in the 2Oth century leadership has been analysed in detail, producing many theories that help us understand the nature of leadership. It is interesting to apply some of these models to Sophie's leadership style. Can they help us to analyse and critique Sophie's leadership?

It seems clear to any reader of her biographies that Sophie can, indeed, be called a leader. Furthermore,

This painting was one of two originally placed on the original reliquary of Saint Madeleine Sophie in Jette-St-Pierre, Brussels, at the time of her beatification (1908). It represents Sophie under the cedar tree she planted in 1920 in the garden of the Mother House in Paris, with the students of the convent of the Rue de Varenne (aka: Hotel Biron.)

it could be argued that she can be considered to have been before her time, considering her emphasis on modern managerial topics such as work ethic, work standards, and the development of others. Also, it should not be forgotten that she worked in an era and society when women were not held in high esteem or encouraged to be involved in leadership roles.

Sophie's role as a leader

A leader's main responsibility is to ensure that the people in an organisation are effective and cohesive and that they are constantly supported. This involves an awareness and understanding of society and the external environment as well as teaching, coaching and motivating people. Sophie can be said to have scored high in these functional areas. She certainly had to cope with challenges from the Church and from colleagues. She had to struggle to deal with them but she succeeded.

She succeeded because she had the characteristics or traits necessary to win such battles. Some of these traits have been identified in leadership studies and include self-confidence, honesty and integrity, high levels of ambition, initiative and the desire to lead others to reach shared goals. All of these sound very like Sophie, especially the last.

Working with people

In general, Sophie preferred to consult with people rather than to give orders. When there were differences of opinion, she tended to be moderate and sought to compromise. She was a realist and always pragmatic. Her core ambition appears to have been a desire to win the 'hearts and minds' of her followers rather than take an authoritarian approach. This more democratic style is relatively modern and says a lot about her intuitive approach to her interpersonal relations.

Spiritual leader

She also displayed this intuition in her approach to the recruitment of those who wished to join the Society. She was reluctant to recruit anyone she thought was not suitable for that kind of life.

The spiritual core of the Society was focussed on the love of God revealed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Members needed to be able to commit to a life of prayer and reflection, in addition to performing external tasks. As leader, Sophie constantly brought this to members' attention.

A great leader

It seems clear to any reader of her biographies that Sophie was indeed an effective leader. There were no leadership courses to guide Sophie as she took on the responsibility of the Society. Clearly, she developed her own individual style as she experienced the day-to-day realities of the challenge. Could anyone claim that she should have done better?

Furthermore, it can be argued that she was before her time, considering her emphasis on work ethic, work quality and development of others. It should not be forgotten that she worked in an era when women were not held in high esteem.

In a large international organisation, she could often communicate only by letter. Many members in other countries never saw her. No doubt they would have frequently heard about this woman in France, their Superior General. It is fascinating to imagine what they might have thought and said about her.



St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, portrait by

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Activities related to Leadership

These activities may be used as questions to individuals or groups or as discussion or debate topics.

- I. Assume that you work in a business organisation. What characteristics would you like the head of the business to have? Why did you choose those particular characteristics?
- II. Sophie's style of leadership included being very blunt about someone's performance. Explain why you felt that this would or would not be effective in modern times?
- III. Identify some of the skills that leaders are noted to have.
- IV. Sophie was a powerful role model for many of her colleagues. Some of them founded other religious communities. Carry out some research to find out who did so.
- V. Do you have a friend who, in your opinion, will be a good leader? Why do you think she would be?

How do you think Sophie's leadership relates to the five Goals of Sacred Heart education: Faith, Character, Intellect, Community and Social Awareness?



A view onto the countryside in Burgundy, France

Spirituality and faith

"Be humble, be simple, bring joy to others."

Spirituality

What does the word 'spirituality' mean? Such a question can, and does, cause long debates and produces many definitions. It is not easy to define. In fact, one survey of literature on the topic of spirituality found twenty-seven different definitions.

Nevertheless, we all have our own individual view; we know what we think it is but may find it difficult to explain our interpretation to others. Perhaps we feel that it has to do with things such as prayer, going to Mass or visiting a church. For most of us, it probably implies a relationship or communication with God. For Catholics it is certainly related to a belief in, and devotion to, Jesus.

Sophie's parents taught her how to pray and she did so every day of her life. However, her family were Jansenist Catholics and she constantly struggled with the Jansenist theories of a cruel God and a sinful human race.

Sophie's instinct and intuition appear to have determined her firm belief in a loving God. Why would God, as creator, wish to punish those He had created? During the Enlightenment period, simple thoughts like these had been the subjects of complex and detailed philosophical and theological debates. Following the Reformation these debates resulted in many different branches of Christianity. Sophie would have heard of many of these theologies and was probably influenced by some. She also would have been attracted to the principles of the French School of Spirituality, with its focus on faith, holiness and devotion to Jesus. Her early desire to become a Carmelite nun could not be pursued because the Carmelites had been abolished in 1790 as had many other religious communities.

It is difficult to decide whether her lifelong struggle with Jansenism was

a benefit in the long run or whether it lessened her certainty in her own ambitions. It obviously caused her great stress and, at times, damaged her self-belief. On the other hand, it may have forced her to analyse her own feelings and generate a deeper commitment to her beliefs.

Throughout her period as Superior General, Sophie emphasised the 'internal life' and encouraged her colleagues to develop their own internal lives through regular prayer. She was not neglecting the external tasks necessary to sustain the Society's work but recognising that the energy, motivation and confidence necessary for the Society's external work would only come from a deep inner devotion to the Heart of Christ.

Spirituality and society

In addition to religion, our spirituality is also influenced by the norms of our society and our experiences as we live in it. Sophie was born in violent times when ideals such as Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, the slogans of the French Revolution, were overtaken by the violence, cruelty and executions of the infamous Reign of Terror. This occurred when Sophie was fourteen. France was in turmoil both internally and externally in its relationships with other countries. She saw the fall of the monarchy, its restoration and fall again. She witnessed many political and social changes. At that time the Catholic Church was viewed by many as the enemy of the state and its government. Indeed, Sophie also had her own disagreements with the Church. In view of this turmoil there can be no doubt that her spirituality and inner certainty must have been seriously challenged. Nevertheless, against this background, she went on to build an international community that is still thriving more than 150 years after her death.

Discovering Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat

Spirituality and faith

To many people, the term spirituality and faith are closely related. Religions call for certain beliefs in which followers have faith. 'Faith' here means that we believe something is true. This faith is based on spiritual inner certainty.

Sophie's spiritualty was built firmly on her belief in the Sacred Heart as a loving channel to God.

'Certainly, the core of Sophie's spirituality is her absorbing focus on the Heart of Christ. This is rooted in her life's experience, a reaching forward, out of Jansenism, into the light of God's love revealed in the Heart of Christ. In Sophie's life these are two movements seeking resolution; or two polarities seeking balance; a continual play of light and shadow.'

My Own Vintage, Phil Kilroy rscj; http://madeleinesophiebarat.org/spirituality.html

Like most other people, Sophie's spirituality must have developed over her life time. Experience changes us. We learn from continuing challenges, errors, failures and successes. Accordingly, our inner life develops as we seek ways of dealing with these outer occurrences. Nevertheless, the 'core' of her spiritualty remained constant. As a person very familiar with the Gospel, Sophie was well aware of Jesus' promise in the Sermon on the Mount.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Matthew 7:7 King James Version; also, Luke 11:9

Activities related to Spirituality and faith

These activities may be used as questions to individuals or groups or as discussion or debate topics.

- I. A friend has asked you to tell her what 'spirituality' means?

 Identify some of the words you would use in your explanation.
- II. Sophie's spirituality helped her through many challenges. Can you think of a challenge that prayer and meditation could help you through?
- III. Is it possible for people who do not have a religion to be spiritual?
- IV. Sophie often talked about the 'inner life'. Can you describe what the term 'inner life' means?
- V. Do you have a favourite prayer? Why does that particular prayer appeal to you?

How do you think Sophie's spirituality relates to the five Goals of Sacred Heart education: Faith, Character, Intellect, Community and Social Awareness?

Self-disclosure and Sophie's letters

Self-disclosure and Sophie's letters

Sophie didn't have the communication tools that we have today so she had to write letters to communicate with a broadly dispersed Society. Obviously, as leader of a recognised religious order, she had to communicate with government and Church officials. Nevertheless, most of her 14,000 letters were to family, friends and Society members. A feature of her letters is that they are often very long and contain a lot of information about herself. She was exceedingly self-aware and was not afraid to open her heart to the reader and disclose her feelings and emotions. It is as though her letter writing was a form of self-analysis as well as an outlet for doubt and hope. It is interesting to discover what Sophie said about herself in her letters.

Regret and acceptance

Late in her life Sophie can vividly recall her youthful desire to join the Carmelites. She concedes that the will of God wanted other things from her. She contrasts the 'whirlwind' of everyday work with the refuge that can be taken in the Heart of Jesus. This letter typifies Sophie's ability to bring several ideas, often spiritual, into a few sentences.

'What a life we have...while we were young, we thought that we would bury ourselves in a Carmelite monastery. The ways of God are unfathomable. I would always regret not going to Carmel if I did not have the assurance that God so designed it. But at least we must unite solitude to the work we do, and counter this whirlwind with a deep cavern where the soul can take refuge as often as possible. For us this cavern in the rock is the Heart of Jesus!'

Sophie to Emma de Bouchaud, Paris, 18 June 1853

Sympathy and a subtle reminder

Sophie never visited America, but wrote many times to her friend Philippine, who was in Sugar Creek at the time of this letter. This short extract recognises Philippine's difficulties and again advises reliance on Jesus. Sophie does not miss the opportunity to remind Philippine of her opinion on Philippine's 1818 departure to America.

'I am sorry your house is only a hut. Jesus will help you. It seems to me you went too soon, next year would have sufficed, but our good Master has allowed it for the best. Have confidence. ...Receive the assurance of the tender and unchanging attachment with which it is sweet for me to say, dear Mother and daughter.'

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Sophie to Philippine Duchesne, 23 August 1841

"For the sake
of one child,
I would have founded
the Society."

On recruitment of members to the Society

Sophie had definite opinions on the suitability of those who wished to join the Society and she was very clear on the matter. In 1842, she wrote to her colleague Elizabeth Galitzine about some girls who had joined, complaining that they had:

'neither talent, refinement nor education and worst of all no religious vocation. If this goes on the Society will die out'

In 1849 she wrote on the same topic to Eulalie de Bouchard:

'... we must not accept women who really do not have what is needed to understand religious life and live it... How much I prefer those who have difficult characters but who have soul and energy, to those wet hens who do us no good.'

'Look at what our Society has become in twenty years. It has become unrecognisable. And what worries me most I cannot send away all who damage us.'

It is noteworthy that Sophie would prefer to recruit difficult girls rather than those who did not understand the Society's spiritual priorities and that she regrets her inability to send them away.

Sophie could never have realised that her letters would become public property and that she would be revealing herself to the world at large long after her death. If her letters were not accessible, we would know little about her personal feelings. As the small sample above shows, she could certainly be blunt. However, we should recognise that her straightforward openness won many friends. It is now recognised that self-disclosure can be a very valuable attribute. If we can honestly reveal our feelings to someone, we can develop a deeper mutual understanding. Sophie may have intuitively understood this.

One of her last letters, written to her nephew Stanislaus in 1865, three months before her death, shows us that she remained an outspoken observer of social realities.

'What times we live in! We have two extremes before our very eyes: the view of unbridled luxury which swallows up wealth and yields instant pleasure. And alongside those crazy expenses, there are thousands, I ought to say millions, of people of every class and every age and of every condition, who are dying of hunger'

The sentiments expressed in Sophie's letter to her nephew in 1865 are still a reality in many parts of the world today.

Activities related to Self-disclosure and Sophie's letters

These activities may be used as questions to individuals or groups or as discussion or debate topics.

- I. Self-disclosure is a means of communication by which one person reveals personal information to another. Can you explain why it is considered to be an effective communication tool?
- II. In her letters Sophie often revealed her feelings on various issues. Can you give any examples of her doing so?
- III. Assume you have an argument with a friend. Although you were hurt you know that your friend was also. Would you apologise or wait for your friend to apologise? Why would you make that decision?
- V. If you did apologise would you describe your feelings about the incident? Have you ever considered the language you might use in such a case?
- V. Can you identify some ways in which Sophie's self-disclosure may have enhanced her impact as a leader?

How do you think Sophie's self-disclosure relates to the five Goals of Sacred Heart education: Faith, Character, Intellect, Community and Social Awareness?

Notes



