

In Memory of...Mary Parker Follett
An Interactive Performance by Lecia M. Grossman, MA, CPCC

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Abstract:

This interactive performance art piece focuses on Follett's perspective on the roles of the individual and business in society. It does not drill down on one concept, but attempts to celebrate many of Follett's teachings within the structure of an engaging, heartfelt performance. The performance setting is a memorial service for Follett that uses music, video, graphic recording, audience participation and activities to bring it to life. The author plays the presider over the service. The presider represents both "individual" and "society" through costume. Conference participants will be asked to play readers of Follett's works on the individual (in relation to the whole) and on constructive conflict and integration. Also, they will play a fictitious business leader, employee, and colleague, reading tributes to Follett based on circular response, power-with versus power-over and leadership. The audience will engage in reflective inquiry based on these tributes given to Follett. The performance ends with a "final viewing" with the audience in a circle, fingertip to fingertip. ("To know my place is to be alive at every instant at every fingertip to every contact and to be conscious of those contacts." - MPF) A video slide show set to music will be playing, honoring Follett.

This art-based interactive event honors Follett's thought, "Concepts can never be presented to me merely, they must be knitted into the structure of my being, and this can be done only through my own activity."

SET-UP: Coffin center stage with flowers. Soft music playing. Programs on seats. There is an image of MPF (1868-1933) projected.

INVITE: The original obituary is on the cover of the performance invite. "Mary Parker Follett, Civic Leader Dies", obituary, New York Times, Dec. 21, 1933, p.21, col.1. (This could be in the program, or sent as an email to attendees.) Contents to follow.

ROLES/ACTORS:

- *Reverend Individual Society (played by Lecia Grossman):* This role switches between Lecia (individual) and society (the whole.) The reverend wears a stole and on the front side it says "individual" and on the backside it says "society." When the Reverend is speaking from Lecia's point of view (individual) she will face forward. When speaking as society (the whole) she will turn her back to the audience.
- *Reader #1, Reader #2, a business leader, an employee, a colleague of Mary Parker Follett.* All roles filled conference attendees who are given the script and their reading prior to the event. A request for volunteers will go out one month before the conference.

MEMORIAL SERVICE PROGRAM (HANDOUT)

There is a picture of MPF on the front with her dates, 1868-1933. The inside has the information found below. There is a page for taking notes during reflective portions of the service/performance.

"We are *alive*. This is the first lesson for us to learn. That very word means change and change. Growth and growth. To live gloriously is to change undauntedly...it is upon those who can fearlessly embrace the doctrine of "becoming" that the life of the future waits."

- Mary Parker Follett, *The New State*, 1918

Prelude: Vivaldi's Winter, performed by Die Vier Jahreszeiten, from the film *I Musici (YouTube) Playing as people enter.*

Opening: Reverend Individual Society

First Reading & Reflections: The Individual from *The New State*

Second Reading: Constructive Conflict – Integration: from *Dynamic Administration*

Artistic Reflection: (Group exercise)

Tributes: (written by volunteers or Lecia to provide)

Colleagueon **Circular Response**

Employee..... on **Law of the Situation/Power-with vs. Power-over**

Business Leader on **Leadership**

Creative Group Reflection: (all attendees) led by Reverend Society

Prayer Intentions: Reverend Individual Society

A Thank You to Mary Parker Follett: Rev. Individual Society

Final Viewing: (please join in a circle around coffin)

Postlude & Slideshow: Suddenly I See (by KT Tunstall)

There will be a blank page in program for notes and reflections.

EVENT SCRIPT

PRELUDE.....Vivaldi's winter is being shown.

OPENINGReverend Individual Society
Welcome. We gather today to honor Mary Parker Follett a woman with ideas and philosophies for her time and ahead of her time. Today's gathering is a tribute to Mary not only in the learning we will share but in the form of how the learning takes place. Please participate in this experimental, experiential memorial service that is 'in memory' and 'in the now.'

Mary, God rest her soul, was religious throughout her life but only shared her religious leanings to those that she felt would understand them. So, today's service will be an expression of her teachings versus perhaps her religious leanings. Thus, it will be a participative event with you interweaving her teachings into your knowledge through your own activity. *"Concepts can never be presented to me merely, they must be knitted into the structure of my being, and this can be done only through my own activity."* (Mary Parker Follett, *Creative Experience*.)

Mary was a child of a recovered alcoholic who had abandoned his family for a time, and a mother concerned about her place in society. She was a sister to a brother she did not trust, to the point of asking her companion to burn her papers upon her death so he would not have them in her possession. Mary immersed herself in her studies throughout her childhood and young adult life and graduated summa cum laude from Radcliff in history, econ, government, law and philosophy in 1898 (and to think she couldn't vote!)

I could not possibly tell you all that Mary has contributed to our society, but here are just a few of her achievements: *(These are posted as people enter.)*
1896 - Wrote and published *The Speaker of the House* while still in college at age 27 – and she couldn't even vote. Teddy Roosevelt gave her high praise for the book and said she "understood the operation of Congress a great deal better than Woodrow Wilson!"
1900 – Voluntary social worker in Roxbury, MA
1908 – Chair of Women's Municipal League Committee on Extended Use of School Buildings
1911 - Co-founder of the East Boston High School Social Center and other social centers in Boston. These centers were highly regarded and used as a template for other social centers through out the country.
1917 - Vice-president of National Community Center Association
1918 - Published *The New State* - on community, democracy, and government

1924 - Published *Creative Experience* - about the creative interaction of people in group process (Much of her theories on social interaction were from her observation and walks through Boston's 17th Ward.)

1928 - Consulted with the League of Nations and International Labour Organization in Geneva

1933 - Lectured at the London School of Economics

1942 – Her papers were published in *Dynamic Administration*. This publication came about after her death because, against her request, her companion did not burn all her papers but believed they needed to be shared.

She had a great impact on many disciplines. She conceptually anticipated systems thinking, vision-driven leadership, management coaching, team and network structures and diversity integration – hot topics of our time. She was a pioneer of human psychology and human relations focusing on groups and group processing. As stated in her biography, Mary was a plain spinster with forbidding exterior, yet she was a charmer. She connected well and could genuinely identify with a wide range of people. The root of her social gift was her vivid interest in life. She valued every individual's experience and viewpoint and had a remarkable ability to understand divergent viewpoints. (If only we had more of this today!)

The time that I have spent with Mary (through her writings) what has stood out for me is curiosity, her dedication to observation, her ability to make complex concepts real through her simple stories. But even more so is her constant action and implementation of her ideas. She not only was an observer and philosopher, but a creator. She was constantly observing and taking action. She did not seem to stop her activities because she was a woman, or because she didn't have any business experience or because she couldn't vote. She was curious. And she believed in activity and experience as roads to learning. She didn't just talk about ideas, she did something about them. She saw possibility for unifying everywhere and spoke, wrote, taught and acted on this belief. Those that have discovered her are from many disciplines.

ASK: What stands out for you as you hear all these different accomplishments? (Pause for audience to reply.)

FIRST READING: The Individual (in Relation to the Whole) The first reading is taken from *The New State*.

Individuality is the capacity for union. The measure of individuality is the depth and breadth of true relation. I am an individual not as far as I am apart from, but as far as I am a part of other men. Evil is non-relation. The source of our strength is the central supply. You may as well break a branch off a tree and expect it to live. Non-relation is death...

For we must remember when we say that the essence of individuality is the relating of self to other difference, that difference is not something static, something given, that it also is involved in the world of becoming. This is what experience teaches me – that society needs my difference, not as an absolute, but just so much difference as will relate me. Differences develop within the social process and are united through the social process. Difference which is not capable of relation is eccentricity....It is not my uniqueness which makes me of value to the whole but my power of relating. The nut and the screw form a perfect combination not because they are different, but because they exactly fit into each other and together can perform a function which neither could perform alone. It is not that the significance of the nut and screw is increased by their coming together, they have no significance at all unless they do come together. The fact that they have to be different to enter into any fruitful relation with each other is a matter of derivative importance – derived from the work they do.

Thus an individual is one who is being created *by* society, whose daily breath is drawn *from* society, who life is spent *for* society. When we recognize society as self-unfolding, self-unifying activity, we shall hold ourselves open to its influence, letting the Light stream into us, not from an outside source, but from the whole of which we are a living part. It is eternally due us that the whole should feed and nourish and sustain us at every moment, but it cannot do this unless at every moment we are creating it. This perfect interplay is Life.

READING #1 : REFLECTION

We will now honor Mary by reflecting on her writings. (*Pose these questions and hold silence until someone feels compelled to speak - Quaker style. Depending on the number of attendees, this can be done as large group or smaller groups.*)

- What has been evoked or inspired in you because of this reading? What questions or insights? (Have attendees write and post on wall.)
- How do you view your differences after hearing this reading?
- How do you feel a part or apart from the whole?
- If corporations are seen as individuals, what might these writings imply?

SECOND READING: Constructive Conflict - Integration

The second reading is from *Dynamic Administration*, a compilation of speeches and writings by Mary Parker Follett.

There are three main ways of dealing with conflict: domination, compromise and integration. Domination, obviously, is a victory of one side over the other. This is the easiest way of dealing with conflict, the easiest for the moment but not usually successful in the long run, as we can see from what has happened since the War.

The second way of dealing with conflict, that of compromise, we understand well, for it is the way we settle most of our controversies; each side gives up a little in order to have peace, or, to speak more accurately, in order that the activity which has been interrupted by the conflict may go on. ... Yet no one really wants to compromise, because that means a giving up of something. Is there then any other method of ending conflict? There is a way of beginning now to be recognized at least, and even occasionally followed: when two desires are *integrated*, that means that a solution has been found in which both desires have found a place, that neither side has had to sacrifice anything... Compromise does not create, it deals with what already exists; integration creates something new... I call this: setting friction to work, making it *do* something.

One advantage of integration over compromise I have not yet mentioned. If we get only compromise, the conflict will come up again and again in some other form, for in compromise we give up a part of our desire, and because we shall not be content to rest there, sometimes we shall try to get the whole of our desire. Watch industrial controversy, watch international controversy, and see how often this occurs. Only integration really stabilizes. But by stabilization I do not mean anything stationary. Nothing every stays put. I mean only that the particular conflict is settled and the next occurs on a higher level...

As someone said, "a man is known by the dilemmas he keeps." In the same way, one test of your business organization is not how many conflicts you have, for conflicts are the essence of life, but *what* are your conflicts? And how do you deal with them? It is to be hoped that we shall not always have strikes, but it is equally to be hoped that we shall always have conflict, the kind which leads to invention, to the emergence of new values.

READING #2: Artistic Reflection

Split attendees into three groups. Each group will be assigned domination, compromise and integration. They will be given directions on human sculpting. When all groups have formed their sculpture, they will be asked to remember it and then will "gallery walk" to see the different sculptures. The group will be asked to hold the position for 90 seconds and the audience will look on in silence. We view each group's sculpture and then return to seats. A few short questions will be posed for the group to reflect and journal on:

- 1) Where in my life do I tend to dominate?
- 2) Where do I compromise, myself, others, or the whole?
- 3) What would it be to approach one of those situations from integration?

TRIBUTES:

Pre-selected conference attendees will prepare the tributes. I will provide them the selected readings below two weeks in advance and they will personalize the information to their own lives and understanding and write a tribute to Follett. I will ask each person to address any or all of the following

in their tribute 1) What concept are you highlighting? What does this concept mean for you in your life? 2) How do you think it has/can make organizations or society better if fully realized? 3) What is possible if this philosophy was fully lived out that you'd like to thank Follett for? Each individual will have 2-3 minutes to say their tribute and/or engage the audience. I will work with each of the individuals to ensure flow between topics and to maximize the learning and experience of these concepts. If there are no volunteers, I will write tributes and ask for volunteers to read.

- Colleague.....(**Circular Response**)
 1. P. 59-65, from *The Creative Experience*
 2. P.81 in MPF, *Prophet of Management* as excerpt from *Dynamic Administration, The Collective Writings of Mary Parker Follett* (gives tennis example)
- Employee..... (**Law of Situation/Power-with vs. Power-over**)
 1. P. 158-159, *Mary Parker Follett, The Prophet of Management, Graham.*
 2. P. 103-109, MPF, *Prophet of Management, Graham, as excerpt from Dynamic Administration.*
- Business Leader..... (**Leadership**)
 1. Chapter six in *The Prophet of Management, "The Essentials of Leadership"*, reprinted from L. Urwick, ed. *Freedom & Co-ordination: Lectures in Business Organisation by Mary Parker Follett* (London: Management Publications Trust, Ltd., 1949), pp. 47-60.

Creative Reflection.....led by Reverend Society
 The group will go to an empty space on stage. Each person will be given a dowel. They will be led through an exercise getting a visceral experience of the different concepts covered so far in the service. Following is a brief outline of directions given to audience members. (Not enough space to give complete script of this.)

- a. Stand with your feet firmly planted and put your finger at the end of the dowel with the other end touching the floor. *Individual experience of connections and tension.*
- b. Now, connect with another person with just one dowel. Each have your fingers on either end. Notice the connection, the energy.
- c. Now choose one person as A and one as B. No talking during the following movements. *Have participants change roles in who is leading and experience domination, compromise and integration.*
 Now continue moving exchanging who is leading and following... Now, focus your attention on just the two of you...now broaden your focus to what is happening in the room, staying connected together.
- d. Find another pair and join together. *Experience cause-effect, circular response, and power-with versus power-over.*
- e. Continue to move and find a way that feels riskier, knowing it is ok to take risks for this is a learning environment.
- f. Ask: What is rattling in your brain right now about that experience?

- g. Small Group debrief. *Here are some possible questions:*
How have you come to know yourself better by your interaction with this group? Where do you begin and they end? What new perspective or information do you have on Follett's work?
- h. Thank you. Please be seated.

PRAYER INTENTIONS.....Reverend Individual Society
These are prayers for the results I believe Follett wanted by living out her philosophies and ideas. Please respond, **“May we work to bring this forth.”**
(Response is up on screen.)

For citizens everywhere, that they may they be active in their communities and come to know themselves as unique through their relation to the whole.
Response: **“May we....”**

For workers in every industry, may they see the power they have in each situation. May they collaborate, take responsibility and feel pride in their work, no matter the leadership style of their manager. **“May we....”**

For organizational leaders, may they believe in their employees and their capabilities, may they nurture and tool them to be collaborators, may they see each difference as a resource of creativity, and may they create opportunities for employees to find pride in their work. **“May we....”**

For world leaders, may they be ever more creative by striving for integration in conflict situations. May they bring about peace through integration versus domination or compromise. **“May we....”**

A THANK YOU TO MARY PARKER FOLLETT...Reverend Mary, thank you. Thank you for all you shared through your books and speeches. I thank you because you lit a flame in me. You expressed ideas about business and society that I felt, but was unable to articulate. The very first time I read an article about your ideas my mind felt a fire kindled. Had I finally found someone who also believed that business could lead the way for positive social change? Found someone who saw corporations' amazing ability and potential for self-fulfillment and social innovation? You saw business as a social agency, a significant part of society, not one to be left out of the invitation, but to lead. You were a champion that believed business could create a fairer, more engaging and empowering society for all.

You saw that business and society cannot be usefully understood in isolation from each other. You believed that solving the problems of business was a step towards solving the problems of the world. You looked beyond profitable business or fair business practices but at the potential for a society where all individuals were involved to form a cohesive social network.

What if every time a political argument started, all parties looked at it from integration versus domination – what might we be able to create? What if we believed that all new cultures, opinions and perspectives imbedded in our countries were a bundle of creativity just waiting to be integrated?!

I thank you Mary for the approach that everything is always changing that we are constantly impacting and simultaneously being impacted. When one holds that viewpoint, it is hard to blame others, because others are a part of me and me a part of the whole. If I blame others, I must in some way blame myself.

Thank you for your belief that activity is the way to learning and change, not just learning ideas and concepts. As a “doer” I appreciate your perspective about getting into action.

John Horne believes that the momentum behind your ideas came from your sheer force of your belief in them and that without your life, your voice died. While your body may be deceased, you are alive here today. I hope today, as we honor you, your voice will become alive more broadly in the world. Thank you, Mary, for giving me (us) language for my (our) thoughts, validation for my (our) actions and inspiration for my (our) dreams.

FINAL VIEWING

There will be a collection of books/papers written by and about Follett in a mock coffin. People will gather in a circle around it.

Reverend Society: Please gather around the coffin for our final viewing. *(Pause)* We stand here today not in grief for how much of Follett’s work has not been lived out fully, but in possibility and hope for a full revival, not only of her thoughts, philosophies and actions, but of acknowledgement for how much she has impacted us. May she be recognized fully in modern day leadership circles as Peter Drucker called her, “The Prophet of Management.”

In honor, let us hold out our arms to the sides, touching your neighbors’ fingertips. *(Pause while people make fingertip-to-fingertip connections.)* As we stand here and as we leave, may we be conscious, in the words of Mary, *(read slowly and deliberately)* “To know my place is to be alive at every instant at every fingertip to every contact and to be conscious of those contacts.” Let us pause for a moment to be conscious of this contact. *(Pause for 30 seconds.)* Let us go now to not only to seek the whole, but know ourselves as a whole.

POSTLUDE.....Suddenly I See (by KT Tunstall)
Slides set to music. The lyrics correspond to images in right column.

LYRICS: Her face is a map of the world	SLIDE SHOW IMAGES Image of MPF with map of
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<p>Is a map of the world You can see she's a beautiful girl She's a beautiful girl And everything around her is a silver pool of light The people who surround her feel the benefit of it It makes you calm She holds you captivated in her palm</p> <p>Suddenly I see (Suddenly I see) This is what I wanna be Suddenly I see (Suddenly I see) Why the hell it means so much to me</p> <p>I feel like walking the world Like walking the world You can hear she's a beautiful girl She's a beautiful girl She fills up every corner like she's born in black and white Makes you feel warmer when you're trying to remember What you heard She likes to leave you hanging on her word</p> <p>Suddenly I see (Suddenly I see) This is what I wanna be Suddenly I see (Suddenly I see) Why the hell it means so much to me</p> <p>And she's taller than most And she's looking at me I can see her eyes looking from a page in a magazine Oh she makes me feel like I could be a tower A big strong tower She got the power to be The power to give The power to see</p> <p>Suddenly I see (Suddenly I see) This is what I wanna be Suddenly I see (Suddenly I see) Why the hell it means so much to me</p>	<p>world behind her</p> <p>Image of MPF with silver background with words integration, power-with, empowerment, democracy, teamwork, unifying, collaboration</p> <p>Flash between images MPF & Lecia Image of all different types of people holding hands</p> <p>Create image of a world with peace mark in it.</p> <p>Image of MPF that gets larger and larger and fills screen</p> <p>“There is no unity, only unifying.”</p> <p>Flash photos back and forth of MPF and my face....then photos of people reaching across borders, “the aisle” or other ways to show unity.</p> <p>Show the magazine article & photo from American Management Association</p> <p>Image of the World Trade center towers – “Power-with vs. Power-over” stamped across it</p> <p>Images of people smiling while they work, diverse people working on an art piece or other project, peace-filled images Ends with the word “LOVE”</p>
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