The Power of Nonviolence

The Power of Nonviolence, written by Richard Gregg in 1934 and revised in 1944 and 1959, is the most important and influential theory of principled or integral nonviolence published in the twentieth century. Drawing on Gandhi’s ideas and practice, Gregg explains in detail how the organized power of nonviolence (power-with) exercised against violent opponents can bring about small and large transformative social change and provide an effective substitute for war.

This edition includes a major introduction by political theorist, James Tully, situating the text in its contexts from the 1920s to 1960s, and showing its great relevance today.

The text is the definitive 1959 edition with a foreword by Martin Luther King Jr. It includes forewords from earlier editions, the chapter on class struggle and nonviolent resistance from 1934, a crucial excerpt from a 1929 preliminary study, a chronology and bibliography of Gregg, and a bibliography of recent work on nonviolence.

Richard Gregg was a Harvard-educated lawyer who practiced law on the side of labor in the great rail workers’ labor strikes in the USA from 1916 to 1922. He moved to India and lived and worked with Gandhi from 1925 to 1929. He returned to the US and wrote several books on Gandhi’s practice of nonviolence in campaigns and Gandhi’s alternative, community-based economics (now called ecological economics). He became the leading theorist of Gandhian nonviolence and economics in North America, UK, Europe, and India from the 1930s until 1970. The Power of Nonviolence was used as a manual for nonviolent campaigns in the civil rights movements, and Gregg had a huge influence on Martin Luther King Jr. This work is considered one of the most important books on the theory and practice of nonviolence in the world.

James Tully is Professor Emeritus at the University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada. His works include Locke in Contexts: An Approach to Political Philosophy (1992), Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity (1995), Public Philosophy in a New Key (2 volumes, 2008), On Global Citizenship: James Tully in Dialogue (2014), and Nichols and Singh, eds.,

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Freedom and Democracy in an Imperial Context: Dialogue with James Tully (2014). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Emeritus Fellow of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, and recipient of both the Killam Prize in the Humanities (2012) and the C. B. MacPherson Prize for Public Philosophy in a New Key. He was co-editor of the Cambridge University Press series Ideas in Context for twenty years.
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Contents

Acknowledgments ix
Chronology x
The Works of Richard Gregg xvii
Editor's Introduction: Integral Nonviolence xxi
Bibliography lxii

THE POWER OF NONVIOLENCE

Preface to the 1934 Edition, Richard Gregg 3
Foreword to A Discipline for Non-Violence 1941, Mohandas Gandhi 6
Foreword to the 1944 Edition, Rufus Matthew Jones 7
Preface to the 1944 Edition, Richard Gregg 10
Foreword to the 1959 Edition, Martin Luther King Jr. 13
Preface to the 1959 Edition, Richard Gregg 15
Preface to the 1960 Indian Publication of the 1959 Edition, Richard Gregg 18

1 Modern Examples of Nonviolent Resistance 20
2 Moral Jiu-Jitsu 49
3 What Happens 59
4 Utilizing Emotional Energy 67
5 How is Mass Nonviolence Possible? 73
6 The Working of Mass Nonviolent Resistance 79
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Chronology

This is based on the Richard Gregg website constructed by John Wooding (2017). I am deeply indebted to the scholarship of Kip Kosek, Janelle Bourgeois, and John Wooding for the biography and introduction. See Kosek, 2005, 2009; Bourgeois and Wooding, 2016; and Wooding, forthcoming.

1. Early Years: Experiencing and Rejecting Industrial Capitalism

1885 Born in Colorado Springs to James and Mary Gregg.
1903 Moves to Boston to commence undergraduate studies at Harvard.
1907 Graduates from Harvard University, science and mathematics. Teaches high-school mathematics and science at the Milton Academy, Milton, Massachusetts.
1908 Enters Harvard Law School.
1911–1913 Works at law office of Gaston, Snow & Saltonstall in Boston, MA.
1913 Visits India for first time with brother-in-law Albert Farwell Bemis. Sees India through Western eyes as less developed.
1914 Practices law with Warner, Warner & Stackpole in Boston, but decides it is not for him.
Chronology

1916  Secures a labor management position in the new firm of Robert G. Valentine and Orway Tead in Chicago; experts in personnel management and industrial psychology.

1917  Moves to Washington and the US Shipping Board when the US enters WWI, and works on the dispute between ship-owners and seamen and longshoremen.

1918  Accepts a position with the National War Labor Board (NWLB). During the Bethlehem Steel strike Gregg is the examiner in charge. He writes “Ways in Which Bethlehem Steel Company is Derelict in this Award.”


1921  Accepts a job in the Railway Department Employees Union, an amalgam of unions of members who built and maintained the nations’ trains.

1921–1922  Nationwide railway strikes and violent repression involving over 400,000 workers. Gregg travels across the US in support of strikers. Railway workers are forced to capitulate. Discovers Gandhi’s writings in a Chicago bookstore and “felt impelled to go and live alongside him and learn more” (Wooding, forthcoming, chapter 4).

1923  Disillusioned by war as means to settle conflicts, the violence of industrial capitalism, and the repression of the labor movement, Gregg becomes a farmhand in Phillips, Wisconsin, and takes courses on agriculture at University of Wisconsin at Madison.

1924  Writes to Gandhi. Gandhi was in jail. C. F. Andrews replies and invites Gregg to come to Gandhi’s ashram at Sabarmati. Writes letter to his family explaining his rejection of violence and industrial capitalism and reasons for moving to India.

2. India: Gandhian Satyagraha, Economics, and Constructive Programs

1925  Sails for India, January 1.

1925–1929  Lives and works with Gandhi in his ashram at Sabarmati, along with C. F. Andrews, Maganlal Gandhi (Gandhi’s
nephew), and Mirabehn (Madeline Slade). Teaches and writes on earth sciences, Gandhian technology, economics, agriculture, and nonviolence at schools Gandhi recommends; engages in farming and spinning programs (Khaddar) in the villages. Meets Rabindranath Tagore, G. Ramachandran, Jawahamal Nehru, Samuel Evans Stokes, and Rajendra Prasad. Teaches for Stokes at his school for three years.

1926 Publishes text on the craft of spinning cloth with Maganlal Gandhi, *The Takli Teacher*, and *A Preparation for Science*, explaining the value of Gandhi’s handicraft and agricultural technology.

Begins correspondence with W. E. B. Du Bois on the use of nonviolence and Gandhian economics in anticolonial, labor, and African American struggles against racism and inequality (see Kosek, 2005).

1928 Publishes *The Economics of Khaddar*, his first explanation of Gandhian nonviolent economics and its superiority to industrial capitalism.

Returns to the USA and lives with his sister in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

1929 Marries Nonie Davies Tupper, an interior designer, on April 14 in New York City.


1930 Visits India with Nonie, reunites with Gandhi and the Salt march. Returns to US and lives at Nonie’s studio on Boylston Street, Boston.

1931 Publishes *Gandhiism and Socialism in India* in defense of Gandhian economics.

1932 Publishes *Gandhiism and Socialism as Gandhiism versus Socialism* in the United States.


1936 Takes job at Pendle Hill Quaker retreat and study center in Pennsylvania to serve as Acting Director.

1936 Publishes *The Value of Voluntary Simplicity*. 

xii
In July visits the United Kingdom and the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) at the request of Dick Sheppard, who had founded the PPU. In UK he becomes friends with Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard. Publishes Training for Peace, introduced by Huxley. Huxley recommends Power of Nonviolence in Ends and Means (Huxley, 1937b, pp. 139, 151).

1937
Gandhi publishes “What is Khadi Science?” in praise of Gregg’s Economics of Khaddar (Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi [CWMG], 70, pp. 288–90).

1938
Publishes “Non-Violence the Only Way.”

1939
Publishes Pacifist Program in Time of War, Threatened War or Fascism and “Gandhiji as a Social Scientist and Social Inventor.”

1939–1966
Gregg’s books and pamphlets are promoted by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the War Resister’s League, Congress of Racial Equality, Peace Pledge Union, and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, among others.

1940
Gregg’s (1938) letter to Gandhi explaining his research plans “to try to get the Western world to realize the validity and practicalness of your entire programme” is published in Harijan: “Non-violence and Khadi.”

3. Nonviolent Direct Action and Voluntary Simplicity in the West

1941–1942
Gregg and Nonie sell house in Natick. Gregg works as a farmhand and apprentice in six-week course learning biodynamic, ecologically sustainable farming and gardening at Kimberton Farm, PA. Meets Evelyn Speiden, who would become his co-author and, much later, his second wife. Publishes A Discipline for Nonviolence, foreworded by Gandhi.

1942
Robert Swann, founder of the Committee on Non Violent Action and the Schumacher Center for a New Economics, meets Gregg at a workshop; it is his “first real contact with
Chronology

the intellectual ideas behind nonviolence.” They corre-
spond on nonviolence and organic farming (Swann, 2001).

1942–1943 Works at the dairy farm of a friend in west central Vermont.

1942–1946 Participates in the School for NonViolence in Big Flats, New York, a camp for conscientious objectors during WWII.

1944 Publishes second edition of PNV, introduction by Rufus M. Jones.

1944 Takes a position teaching mathematics in Putney, Vermont, in order to care for his ill wife. Publishes Primer of Companion Planting: Herbs, their Part in Good Gardening, with Evelyn Speiden. Nonie’s health deteriorating (dementia).

1946 Resigns from position in Putney to care for his wife.

1947 Publishes “The Validity of Indian Handicrafts in this Industrial Era.”

1947–1956 Reluctantly places his wife in long-term care. In early 1949 moves to the cooperative, organic farm of Helen and Scott Nearing in Jamaica, VT.

1948 Gandhi assassinated January 30. Gregg writes “My Memories of Gandhi” years later (n. d.).

1949–1950 Visits India for six weeks and attends World Pacifist Conference.

1951 Publishes Indian edition of PNV 1944 with new introduction.

1952 Publishes Which Way Lies Hope? An Examination of Capitalism, Communism, Socialism, and Gandhi’s Program.


1956 Leaves the Jamaica, Vermont farm and marries Evelyn Speiden.

1956–1958 Teaches Gandhian ecological economics in south India at an education center for social workers that is the school of G. Ramachandran to train young Indians to carry on Gandhi’s program. (Gregg met Ramachandran in 1925 at the school of Rabindranath Tagore.)

1956  Begins correspondence with Martin Luther King Jr., who was given a copy of PNV 1944 by Glenn Smiley.


1959  Meets King in February at War Resister’s League annual dinner. King’s speech paraphrases some of Gregg’s arguments in PNV. King leaves for India with a list of people to visit provided by Gregg.¹

       July 22–24, leads discussion group at King’s First Southwide Institute on Nonviolent Resistance to Segregation at Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia (King, 1959).

       Publishes third edition of PNV, foreword by Martin Luther King Jr. (called the second revised edition).

1960  October 14–16, teaches nonviolence workshop with King at the SNCC conference on “Nonviolence and the Achievement of Desegregation,” Atlanta, Georgia (King, 1960) [www.crmvet.org/docs/6010_sncc_conf_agenda.pdf](http://www.crmvet.org/docs/6010_sncc_conf_agenda.pdf)


       Participates in the nonviolent protest at Polaris Action in Groton, CT against nuclear weapons.

1963  Publishes *The Big Idol* on decentralized currencies.

5. Last Years

1964  Moves to McMinville, Oregon, as his health begins to decline due to Parkinson’s disease. Publishes “The Best Solver of Conflicts” and “Satyagraha as a Mirror.”

¹ For the influence of Gregg’s PNV on King, see Miller, 1998, pp. 88–100.
Chronology

      First Schocken Press edition of PNV.
      Publishes *Companion Plants and How to Use Them* with Helen Philbrick.

1968  Moves to a retirement community, Cascade Manor, Eugene, Oregon. Publishes “A Possible Aid to Satyagrahis.”

1969  It is suggested that Gregg presents his article “Gandhi as a Social Scientist and Social Inventor” at the Gandhi Centenary Conference on Science, Education, and Nonviolence, October 11–17, 1969, at the Gujarat Vidyapith University, founded by Gandhi in 1920.

1974  Dies January 27.
The Works of Richard Gregg

Richard Gregg is the author of sixty-six works in 339 publications and seven languages. The Power of Nonviolence has been published in 121 editions in the period 1934–2013, and in five languages (www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n50-31468/).


Gregg, 1926b, with Maganlal K. Gandhi. The Takli Teacher (Ahmedabad: All India Spinner’s Association). CWMG 35.


Works of Richard Gregg


Gregg, 1930d. Gandhi’s Satyagraha or Non-violent Resistance (Madras: S. Ganesan).


Gregg, 1933. “An American on Spiritual Fasts,” Harijan (December 8).


Gregg, 1939a. Pacifist Program in Time of War, Threatened War or Fascism, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 5 (April). https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.8b156699;view=1up;seq=6


Gregg, DFNV 1941. A Discipline for Nonviolence, with introduction by Mohandas Gandhi (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press).

xviii
Works of Richard Gregg


xix
Works of Richard Gregg

Gregg and Martin Luther King Jr. Correspondence. http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/
Editor’s Introduction

Integral Nonviolence

Richard Gregg’s *The Power of Nonviolence* (PNV) is one of the most important and influential texts in the history of nonviolence. It is even more important today, as many aspects of Gregg’s philosophy have stood the test of practice and time. It is a classic.

Although PNV has been published several times, it has never been issued with an introduction that situates it in the contexts in which it was written and received. Yet, if it is read without this broader context, the reader will be “left hanging in mid-air” and fail to understand its full significance. The reason for this is that PNV explicates only some, crucially important branches of nonviolence as Mohandas Gandhi and Gregg understand it:¹

War is an inherent, inevitable and essential element of the civilization in which we live. Our aim can be nothing short of building an entirely new civilization in which domination and violence of all kinds play a small and steadily decreasing part. We must change nonviolently and deeply the motives, functions, and institutions of our whole culture.

Footnote references to PNV are to pages in this edition. References to PNV 1934, PNV 1944, and to Gregg plus date are located in “The Works of Richard Gregg” above. Other author-date references are located in the “Bibliography” below.

¹ Gregg, 1953, p. 9. (Compare PNV 196, Gregg, 1937, pp. 1–3). He sketches various branches of a nonviolent civilization, not in any “dogmatic spirit,” but “just as an anvil upon which others can hammer out their own ideas.”
Editor’s Introduction

The first step toward such a society is the development of people capable of making such changes, and this I have discussed at length in my book, The Power of Nonviolence. But to say no more than that would leave most people hanging in mid-air. Most of us want to know, also, what kind of outer world such people would try to create.

For Gandhi and Gregg, nonviolence is a multifaceted alternative way of life, civilization, or “countermodernity” composed of many interrelated and interdependent branches, analogous to a living banyan tree in its biotic community. ²

Accordingly, the aim of this introduction is to sketch the other main branches, as Gregg explicates them in other writings, so readers can see PNV as the crucial first step in creating and sustaining a nonviolent civilization. The “Chronology” above describes the major steps and contexts in Gregg’s journey to a life of nonviolence, while “The Works of Richard Gregg,” which follows, lists his writings on each branch. These should be read alongside this introduction. ³ The first section provides a preliminary synopsis of the broader context of realizing a nonviolent world in the midst of a world of violence and domination. The sections that follow explore the ways PNV and other nonviolent branches work together to bring about this transformation.

Synopsis

The power of nonviolence, or satyagraha, is the intersubjective power of interacting “with and for each other” in cooperative ways in interdependent relationships with oneself (ethics), other humans, all life forms, and the spiritual dimension of existence. It is “power-with”: the type of power that animates and sustains all branches of a nonviolent way of life. ⁴ An “entirely new civilization” is brought into being by people developing and exercising the capabilities to use the power of nonviolence with each other in and among the various branches of modern societies. ⁵ In learning how to connect with, trust, exercise and be

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² Gandhi, 1919a, pp. 443–44. Kosek calls Gregg’s “new civilization” a “countermodernity” (Kosek, 2005, p. 1346).
³ See above, x–xx.
⁴ The terms “power-with” to designate nonviolent power and “power-over” to designate violent and dominative power were introduced by Mary P. Follett (Follett, 1924). Gregg refers to her work in all PNV editions.
⁵ PNV 194, 196–200. Gregg’s description is very similar to the editor of Gandhi 1961a (Kumarappa 1961, p. v).
empowered by this “persuasive” form of power, humans participate in “spiritual unity” or anima mundi; the more general form of power—with that animates and sustains all interdependent life on earth. In contrast, violence and domination are the general type of power exercised in violent conflicts and unequal relationships of domination and subordination that are imposed and backed up by force, or the threat of force, and various types of legitimation. It is “power−over” in its many forms. It is based on the false presupposition that humans are basically independent, insecure, and incapable of organization and dispute resolution without the exercise of violence and domination by a ruler. The violence and domination, and the exploitation it makes possible, give rise to increasing cycles of violent resistance, counter-violence and domination. These cycles are justified by the assumption that violent and dominating methods (wars or revolutions) can bring about peaceful and nondominating ends. But this is a false view of the relation between means and ends. The vicious cycles continue because means are autotelic: “the nature of the end reached in any endeavor is determined by the character of the means used to reach it.” Nonviolent cooperation is the only way to a peaceful and democratic world.

PNV is Gregg’s explication of how to develop and exercise the capabilities humans have to exercise the persuasive power of nonviolence in all relationships and branches. However, the central focus of the book is on the branch and subbranches that deal with the “greatest and most difficult human problem, that of violence and the handling of conflicts.” The solution is to learn how to exercise the ability to engage in conflicts nonviolently and resolve them by working up uncoerced relationships of cooperation together. Gregg shows how Gandhi developed a way of nonviolent contestation oriented to cooperation that can be used successfully in engagement with violent, as well as nonviolent, opponents. This way of nonviolent training, contestation (what Gregg calls moral jiu-jitsu), and cooperation (integration) has the capacity to transform and replace the systems of violent conflicts and domi

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6 PNV Chapter 10. Compare Gregg, 1930d, pp. 403–09, PNV 1934, pp. 217, 287, and below, lvi. In Gregg’s generation in the West, this scientific view of humans as participatory members of the living earth was associated with Alexander von Humboldt and John Muir. See Worster, 1994, Wulf, 2015.
7 PNV 117, 156–60.
9 Gregg, 1948, p. 12.
relationships. This unique mode of contestation, resolution, and transformation of violent opponents and social systems is not simply war without violent weapons (unarmed resistance), but a different game altogether: nonviolent agonistics.

The problem of finding a “substitute” for war and violent revolution is the central challenge addressed to nonviolent movements of the twentieth century. Gregg concludes the central argument of PNV by stating that he has shown a substitute for both exists and that it works; whereas they produce cycles of increasing violence and domination.

Gregg argues that nonviolent contestation and cooperation can transform, reduce, and replace violence and domination only if the power of nonviolence is also cultivated in other branches of society and coordinated with practices of contestation. These branches are the “constructive programs” for and of a nonviolent civilization. Their participants create grassroots nonviolent lifeways within, around, and against the dominant institutions of modern civilization in ethics, the practices of everyday life, self-government, economics, technology, ecology, health and well-being, and education. By coordinating contestation and constructive programs, a peaceful and democratic world is brought into being by peaceful and democratic means. Given the autotelic relation between means and ends, this is the only way it can be achieved – by being the change.

Many forms of violent and nonviolent power relations exist in every society and criss-cross in complex ways. Internal reform alone is ineffective because violent power-over is “an inherent element” in almost every branch of modern civilization, shaping the “motives, functions and institutions,” as well as the values, assumptions, and forms of subjectivity of moderns. From within the prevailing mindset, nonviolent power is overlooked or perceived as subordinate, relegated to subaltern value spheres, dissimulated to gain power-over, and ridiculed as the soft power of the weak. It becomes difficult to see that the overlooked and misrepresented social and biological relationships of being-with, power-with, and cooperating-with are the background conditions that sustain all forms of life, and that the “civilization in which we live” parasitically depends on and destroys them.

Thus, to see the human condition from the nonviolent perspective and test its validity, it is necessary to move around and begin to be the change by participating in and experimenting with nonviolent constructive and

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Editor’s Introduction

agonistic ways of living and the corresponding ways of knowing these practices disclose to participants.14 Gandhi first sketched out this broader context of nonviolence as a way of life in Hind Swaraj (1909) and Gregg in Gandhiji’s Satyagraha (1930). Gregg argues that transformative social change by integrated small steps and tipping points is similar to the way all life systems regenerate and change.15

Editions of PNV

Gregg wrote two preliminary studies and three different editions of PNV. The Psychology and Strategy of Gandhi’s Nonviolent Resistance (1929) is an early version of what became Chapters 2–7 of the three editions of PNV. Gregg sent it to Gandhi on his sixty-first birthday with love.16 The materials and their arrangement differ somewhat in all three editions of PNV and the analysis is “longer, more exploratory, and more comprehensive.”17 Yet, Psychology and Strategy contains the first formulations of several of his great insights and many sources are quoted fully in it that are deleted or relegated to endnote references in later editions. Gandhiji’s Satyagraha (1930) is his longest and most comprehensive work. Almost all the branches of nonviolence as a way of life are discussed in eighteen chapters and five hundred pages. It is a compendium of preliminary studies for his later works. After 1930 he treats the different branches of nonviolence in separate books and articles.

The first edition of PNV in 1934 is the longest of the three editions, at sixteen chapters and three hundred pages. It expands the material from Psychology and Strategy and draws material from Gandhiji’s Satyagraha to create an integrated philosophy of “nonviolent resistance” in his broad sense of this phrase as the translation of “satyagraha.”18 It rapidly became the leading theory and manual of nonviolent action.19

14 Gregg explains that this is how he underwent the change to nonviolence; by moving to India and living and working with Gandhi (Gregg, 1948). For the best scholarship on this and other aspects of Gregg’s writings in context, see Kosek, 2005, 2009.
16 Gregg, 1929, Preface, no page number.
17 Barker in Gregg, 1929 [1972], pp. 10–11.
18 Gandhi and Gregg use “satyagraha” and “nonviolent resistance” interchangeably and in both a narrow (civil resistance) and broad (nonviolent way of life) sense. By the early 1940s both terms had taken on a wide range of contested meanings. See Paullin, 1944 and Schock, 2015, pp. 24–27.
19 Case, 1972 [1923], Ligt, 1989 [1937], and Shridharani, 1972 [1939] are the other major texts of the period.
As a result of his experience with nonviolent movements during World War II, Gregg realized he needed to rewrite PNV 1934. World War II “created such confused thoughts and feelings, and raised problems which are so universal, so important, so difficult, and so insistent that it has seemed desirable to issue a new edition which will discuss the chief of these new problems.”

He cut eight chapters from the first edition and added three new ones to the second (PNV 1944). He worked on the new chapters on training, discipline, and persuasion in his correspondence with Gandhi, two pamphlets on nonviolent war resistance, and The Discipline for Nonviolence (DFNV 1941). These new chapters mark the turn to the importance of training and constructive programs as the basis of successful nonviolent change, and to his life systems’ account of nonviolent social change. This edition was widely circulated as a philosophy of and training manual for nonviolence in the civil rights and African American movement of the 1950s.

The third, or “second revised,” edition of PNV was first published in 1959 in response to the new context of a much wider range of examples of nonviolent resistance, wars of mass destruction, possible nuclear annihilation, and escalating environmental destruction. This edition is republished here because it is Gregg’s final and most refined account of the power of nonviolence.

The chapters of PNV 1934 that were cut in 1944 and the chapters in Gandhi’s Satyagraha that were not included in PNV 1934 are important for a full picture of Gregg’s intellectual development. However, they do not have the crucial features Gregg introduced in 1944 and refined in 1959. All his prefaxes, Gandhi’s foreword to DFNV, Rufus Jones’ foreword to PNV 1944, and Martin Luther King Jr.’s foreword to PNV 1959 are included because they throw significant light on the context of each edition. Gregg regretted having to cut the important chapter on class struggle and nonviolent resistance in 1944 and 1959, so it is included in this edition (as Chapter 8). Two paragraphs in Psychology and Strategy that help explain why he compares nonviolent contestation and transformation to moral jiu-jitsu are also included. Gregg’s moral jiu-jitsu has

20 PNV 12. 21 See 1944 Preface for the list of cut chapters (PNV 12).
22 See Gregg, 1937, 1938c, 1939a, and 1941.
23 See PNV 16. Resource depletion, environmental destruction, and biological suicide of modern industrial civilization is a central concern of Gregg’s in Gregg, 1930d, 1934, 1952, 1958.