Muscles, Memory: and George Hackenschmidt

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The Russian Lion, George Hackenschmidt, was born in Dorpat, Estonia on August 2, 1878. "Hack," as he was called, had two quite different sides to his career. He was first a professional wrestler and strength athlete; second, he was a serious philosopher. While his upbringing was fairly conventional, at age 17 he dropped out of an apprenticeship program in engineering to take up athletics. By the age of 19 he had already begun to distinguish himself as a wrestler. Although very inexperienced, he wrestled the professional George Lurich (also an Estonian) and almost beat him. Undaunted, he continued training and in 1898 he traveled to St. Petersburg to meet the renowned physician and physical trainer Dr. Krajevski. It was Dr. Krajevski who encouraged Hackenschmidt to stay with him in St. Petersburg and continue weight training. Hack agreed and his natural strength was soon enhanced by the scientific methods employed by Krajevski. Within a year he set a world record in weightlifting and won major wrestling titles in Europe. In 1902, he moved to Britain and continued his professional wrestling career, becoming the most famous wrestler in the world. After defeating Ahmad Madrali in seconds, "Hack" was earning as much as $1,750 a week. Hackenschmidt's career was ended when he received a knee injury while training for a title bout in America with Frank Gotch.[1]

This injury and the loss to Gotch which followed it, caused him to abandon a very lucrative career in the ring. The loss was a bitter one, and Hackenschmidt retired to his study, to think and engage in his second passion—philosophy. Because he was so well known, it was easy for Hackenschmidt to profit from his knowledge and interest in social philosophy by applying it to the new and popular field of physical culture. It was not logical, however, nor could it have been anticipated, that he would turn from physical culture and challenge the better academic philosophers, or that he would lecture at several of the best universities in the United States.

The purpose of this essay is to characterize and assess George Hackenschmidt's systematic philosophy of physical culture and its role in his world view. Critical to this effort is the realization that his writings are retrospective and thus may suffer from some of the same difficulties he castigates in some of his essays, (e.g. ill-used memories). Nevertheless, the overall impression that emerges from a survey of Hackenschmidt's published writings is that extraordinary care was taken in articulating an unusual system of philosophy that rested for its core meaning on a unique vision of the human physique and its development; a biological and organic model of the body as a form of organization. This articulated philosophy is unique in a world of food faddists, exercise gurus, exhibitionists and self-promoters in the fact that it is unassuming, objectively held, and straightforward in its reasonableness. No physical culturist from Bernarr Macfadden to Joseph Weider has presented nearly so detailed a philosophy of physical culture as a part of life as did George Hackenschmidt.

The Course of Strength and Health

The pattern followed by most successful physical culturists of Hackenschmidt's time was first to perfect their strength, health, or physique in some way, gain national or international repute, and then write a book or course about it — to develop and sell some exercise device or health food, and finally sit back and watch the money roll in. George Hackenschmidt seems at first glance to have been no different. A splendid athlete and devotee of physical exercise, he offered his early books for sale through an established exercise-entrepreneurial house (in this case the Milo Barbell Company). What is different about even Hackenschmidt's early efforts is their scholarly, complicated approach. As such they must have baffled the poor unlettered teenager seeking only to put on weight. Furthermore, these books were saturated with a modesty that was uncharacteristic of strength and health promoters in the first half of the twentieth century.

In his book ***The Way To Live,*** Hackenschmidt sets forth the physical culture maxim that informed so many works in the field of health and physical development: "...apart from extraordinary causes, there is absolutely no reason why any man should ever be ill, as long as he keeps his body so physically fit as to safeguard it against any breakdown." This fundamental assumption that exercise-induced fitness would ward off disease had its roots in ancient Greek philosophy. In addition, there is a strong moral dimension to this postulate as well: We are led to believe that illness is associated with evil; while health is synonymous with the good. This is not a particularly Judeo-Christian outlook, but rather has its roots in ancient Greece. Thus, when Hackenschmidt proposes vigorous exercise, he is doing so with the moral/ethical belief that it leads to the good life — and more than this — to "*the* way of life."

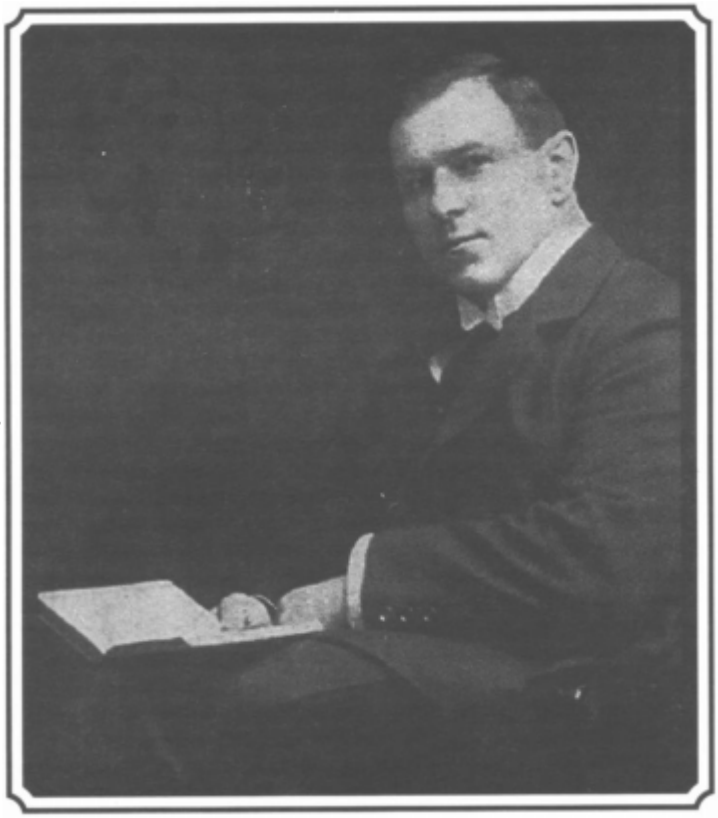
It is interesting to note that the current crop of steroid-nurtured bodybuilders has reversed this ancient Greek ideal; in order to change their bodily appearance, they violate some of the rules of healthful living. In other words, they engage in unhealthy practices in order to become symbols of health.

Hackenschmidt adopted a second fundamental assumption that informed the physical culture movement—try it, then teach it. He boasted that all the techniques of exercise, diet, rest, etc. in his little book were ones he had experimented with and found fruitful. He also proposed that the modern lifestyle had left man weakened and sickly. What was required was heavy weightlifting to increase strength: "For it is *only* by exercising with heavy weights that any man can hope to develop really great strength." In this view, Hackenschmidt was well ahead of other physical culturists of his era, many of whom advocated light calisthenics with Indian clubs or wand drills. Rope jumping and gymnastics could be added to the program, but Hackenschmidt was of the heavy lifting school. Such an exercise program was for old and young alike.

Hackenschmidt adopted the metaphor of a business

enterprise—with a flow of goods, activity, and exchange—to explain the body. If the body was kept active, health would follow; just as activity made businesses prosper.[3] No store or factory could lay idle and prosper; only continual exertion makes for economic growth. He argued that physical exercise strengthens the organization of the body and insulates it against loss. The muscles and sinews are strengthened, Hackenschmidt reasoned, and this helps the body ward off illnesses such as rheumatism and catarrh (the analog to bankruptcy).

. Along with earlier theorists such as Dio Lewis and William Blaikie, Hackenschmidt believed that mental illness, anxiety and other psychic ills were the result of failure to exercise.**[See page three.]** However, beneath the concrete bodily condition, Hackenschmidt reasoned, was a functioning *will.* He saw willpower as the base of a mastery of all the body's organs. Thus, his system involves a mechanistic view of the body and the mind, with the will functioning in a kind of Schoepenhauer/Neitzsche fashion as the driver.



Far ahead of his time, Hackenschmidt argued that willpower could lead to physical exercise, which would encourage the growth of bones and structure. He also believed that exercise improved on one's inherited structure as well as retarding atrophy.

Much of Hackenschmidt's published writings deal with the importance of proper mental attitude in acquiring strength. He asserts that bad thoughts, melancholy, and the lack of persistence doom the growth of strength and health. Tobacco, coffee, and alcohol are all deemed poisons and are to be avoided. He called nicotine "a direct poison to the health," while coffee "is a stimulant and, as such, would be better avoided entirely."[4] He went on to call for moderation in sexual intercourse and complete abstinence in early manhood.

While not a food faddist, Hackenschmidt's recommendations follow those of healthfood proselytizers like Bernarr Macfadden. The best food would be fresh and uncooked, but he realizes that the people of central Europe are accustomed to meat and cooked vegetables. He tells us to avoid refined sugars. He is not in favor of meat from pen-raised animals, but prefers naturally fed beef, etc. Nor was food the only concern for Hackenschmidt; he calls for deep breathing (through the nose), and he advocates running:

> Run as much as you can and as often as you can, and whenever you come across a hill, run up it. This will force you to inhale deep breaths and will also accustom you to breathe through your nose. Besides the chest and lung development resulting there-from you will soon appreciate the benefits which your leg muscles will derive.[5]

He rightly reasoned that good breathing meant that oxygen was introduced into the system to carry away waste products. The skin also required care, and regular baths and naked sunbathing were recommended. Hackenschmidt was true to the physical culturism of his era when he criticized Americans for their excessive use of iced drinks and heated drinks. He also warns against excessive drinking of water. Plenty of sleep, well-ventilated rooms, and proper clothing were added to the list of necessary prerequisites for success in physical development. The adherence to the major physical culture beliefs of his time places Hackenschmidt with health reformers such as Macfadden, who advocated a simple, natural lifestyle.

When Hackenschmidt discusses training, his ideas are remarkably current. He proposes *regular* exercise, preferably at the same hour each day. He limits exercising to 30 minutes. He cautions the pupil not to sit down and rest between exercises. He also recommends loose-fitting clothing and maintains that exercise should be done with concentration and regular breathing. He calls for systematic training of the entire body, not just the parts that are naturally stronger in a person. Barbells and dumbells were to be preferred. Hackenschmidt writes: "...it is my opinion that every one—man, woman, and child without exception—will find exercise with a graduated and suitably adapted series of weights of the utmost benefit..."[6] He begins his exercise section with a number of calisthenics. These are recommended for the beginner, and should be followed by weight-training.

Hackenschmidt's typical exercise schedule begins with a wrestler's bridge with barbell. The 30 to 50 pound bell was to be pressed three times, and a repetition added each session until a total of ten reps could be performed. Then the weight of the barbell was to be increased by five pounds and a set of three repetitions begun, following the increases as before. This wrestling strengthener was followed by a modified push-up with weight suspended from the neck. The second series of exercises treated the neck, shoulders, arms and chest: shrugs, curls and presses, pushups, one-arm presses, floor presses, snatches, pull-overs, and dumbell laterals. The third series treated the stomach, back and hips. This group of exercises included cleans, good morning exercises, deadlifts, leg raises with weights and sit-ups. For forearm and grip he advocated rolling up a weighted rope on a pole. The fourth series dealt with the legs. Here was the famous "Hack squat," with a barbell held behind the buttocks during the squatting movement. The regular squat and a leg press with the barbell balanced on the feet (which looked quite dangerous) followed.

Hackenschmidt, as stated earlier, did not advocate using light weights. He pointed to the fact that long distance runners had comparatively thin legs, the result of many repetitions with no weight. If one wanted strength, then heavy barbells and dumbbells must be used. His was a progressive system, with the pupil adding five to ten pounds each time he was able to complete ten movements. He cautioned against

straining with a weight. The pupil was to take measurements of the body parts and practice poses to foster muscle control. In Chapter XI of his book, ***The Way to Live,*** he describes exercises for particular sports, a procedure followed in many contemporary books on strength training. Here the one and two hand snatch, various presses, and the clean and jerk are illustrated. The bridging exercise is also shown, along with a kettlebell crucifix, and a variety of other strength-building moves.

According to Hackenschmidt, a typical day for an athlete should begin at seven A.M. and consist of a short cold rub or bath (tepid in winter), drying by exercise or rough towel, then 15 or 20 minutes of light exercise. Eight A.M. breakfast and a long walk until 11 A.M. followed. From 11 until noon the pupil engaged in vigorous exercise. Lunch was at 1:30, followed by a nap for one hour. From five until six there was more vigorous exercise. Then at 7:30 dinner, rest, and recreation out of doors. Eleven P.M., bed. On Sundays, no exercise except walking. While this schedule could be modified for summer and winter, Hackenschmidt always adhered to the value of deep breathing, proper ventilation at night, and walking.

The physical culture pupil must concentrate on his/her exercise, pay attention to growth of muscles and follow the rules the master laid out. Hackenschmidt advised against excessive and rapid exercise, calling for slow movements in most lifts and steady increases in the weight lifted. Perseverance was a key to success. A balanced and systematic exercise program must be followed. aimed at developing strength. No tight belts were allowed and a sweater was to be added during breaks in exercising. He advised his pupils to avoid late dinners and to exercise in the open. He also maintained that exercise must be adapted to the age and particular mental and physical condition of the pupil.

The book ***The Way to Live*** assumes the pupil of physical culture to be English or European, urban and sedentary. We are not led to believe that what Hackenschmidt is espousing is a "secret"; rather, it is taken for granted that what he proposes is accepted fact by the leading medical men of the day. There is no effort to hide the elements of the system, or to reveal them successively through a mail-in program (such as the Charles Atlas system). Hackenschmidt is open and straightforward in his pronouncements. Aside from the singular attention to neck exercises, no hint is given that this system was developed by a professional wrestler. What is quite striking is the fact that ***The Way to Live*** avoids overt philosophical explanation; something that appears in all of his subsequent writings.

During World War I and part of the 1920s, Hackenschmidt threw himself into the effort of developing a social philosophy which would do no less than answer life's big questions. Writing sometimes in French, sometimes in German, sometimes in Russian and sometimes in English, Hackenschmidt constructed a world view. He published his results in a series of books, none of which sold many copies, unlike ***The Way to Live,*** which was very successful. One of the problems with the later books is that they are not only densely reasoned, they are very idiosyncratic.

One of Hackenschmidt's most philosophic works was his ***The Three Memories and Forgetfulness.***[7] In trying to account for the vividness of childhood memories in the elderly, Hackenschmidt reveals two assumptions regarding his system. First, as we have seen, he attempts to use a hypothesis derived from a cellular biological theory. This is to say that whatever he is trying to explicate rests for its fundamental warrant on a biological view of the organism. The concept of the cell allows him to deal with complex human behavior without tracing the direct cause-effect relations to any complex of the neurological-psychological network. Second, Hackenschmidt always attempts to give a philosophical reason for physiological phenomena. In other words, he reduces materialistic results to rational grounds. His penchant for a metaphysical explanatory method marks him as unique among physical culturists. While the vast majority of physical culturists utilized biological data in their theories, Hackenschmidt drew upon philosophy to explain his organic model.

With particular reference to his explanatory account of childhood memories, we see the acceptance without question of one of the popular theories of his day: The "unfolding" notion of childhood linked with Pestalozzi, Froebel and so many of the European thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries. This view of childhood development asserted that children became adults like acorns turned to oaks. Within each child was the essential pattern that predetermined its adult form. Like petals of a flower. the child opened up to its mature shape and nature. This process was an organic one and had its driving force in Nature. Metaphysical rather than evolutionary or biological, the theory of unfolding dominated the educational theories of that time. It was naively accepted as metaphysical grounds for all kinds of pedagogical treatments.

Hackenschmidt accepts unfolding uncritically as the mirror opposite of decay and decline. He writes that as we become adults. tissues and cells normally break down, rather than building as in youth. Therefore, the organism yearns to be retrospective and to draw upon earlier, more positive and building kinds of memories. Forgetfulness is linked to the loss of vigor in the tissues. Memories, unlike tissue and cells, are not subject to decay for Hackenschmidt. In extreme old age, memories of childhood replace all current interests owing to this decay factor.

Hackenschmidt rejected the view that memories are rhythmic tunings of the tissues (of cells, limbs or brain). While he accepts the known scientific fact that cells replace themselves, he argues that the replacement is never an exact replication of the cell. The human organism is adapting to the conditions of that particular time in which the cell replacement takes place. These conditions affect that precise nature of the cellular tissue.[8] Hence, Hackenschmidt accepts an adaptation mechanism, albeit not a Darwinian one.

Memories, according to Hackenschmidt, are of three types: "cell-memory" which directs the human organism in choosing nourishment; "limb memories", which direct humans to replicate certain experiences by compensating, often promoting weakness and working against the recovery of self-reliance; and "brain-memories" or accumulated knowledge of other human beings as they accommodated to their environment.

With the exception of cellular memory, Hackenschmidt believes that memory is a negative force in a human's life. He wrote:

> While the human being relied upon his own intrinsic powers alone to meet his environment, his life was lived in terms of reality. When he established an equality with the environment it was an equality in reality. He alone had met the environment, his resources of dynamic energy alone had opposed the dynamic resources of the environment, and had been the means of establishing an equality with it. When memory supervened, this reality of life was gone.[9]

Memory really separated people from reality. He repeatedly talks of memory as a "compensation" device. Continually calling upon memory allows it to gain control and soon the

organism is dictated by its memories. At this juncture, the person is hardly a human being at all.[10].

We can only speculate as to why Hackenschmidt was driven to adopt such a theory of mind. Perhaps the tragedy of his two controversial losses to Frank Gotch made memories painful. An intelligent and sensitive man, he seemed to have been devastated by the events. Certainly he had to recall past strategies and approaches used by his adversaries. Yet, when we look at his brief biographical account in his book ***The Way To Live,*** we find an account devoid of any detailed analysis of the past. He speaks reverently of his strength and wrestling coach, Dr. Krajevski, and admits to having "...shed many a tear over the loss of this noble-hearted gentleman..."[11] There is, however, little understanding of the emotional or psychological dispositions of his wrestling opponents. He praises the opponents' prowess, acknowledges his own injuries and difficulties, but without boastfulness lists win after win. Ultimately refusing to acknowledge himself as a champion, although he could have claimed that honor with ease over the years, Hackenschmidt seems to possess an uncanny objectivity and remoteness from the characters and events that had an impact on him. Always optimistic, he nonetheless evidences an unusual view of time, and is uniquely disposed toward others' and his own experiences.

The ideal that Hackenschmidt embraces has allure: live each moment with all of one's total life force, free from historic consciousness, free from the dead weight of memory and remembrance. What more could a ground-breaking physical culturist wish? Hackenschmidt is not the first thinker to question the legacy of civilization, to see it as an encumbrance, an albatross around the neck of humanity. Henry David Thoreau castigated language, without which he felt human beings could embrace the immediate moment without encumbrance. Carl Rogers sought to eliminate the crush of tradition, and Freud the legacy of psychological ruptures and scars. What makes Hackenschmidt's ideal so compelling is the promise of perfect (or near perfect) health and strength. Devoid of memory, the body races forward to perfect itself. Free of brain and limb history, the body is ready to re-make itself into perfect health—the physical/moral embodiment of the Greek ideal. Here John Dewey's reconstructionist critique of Hegelian idealists provides an explanation for Hackenschmidt's views. A total naturalism that divides the conscious civilized self from the unconscious physical self. A dualism between mind and body. A kind of anti-intellectualism that appeals to intellectuals by retiring the constant monitoring of the mind. Left to its own devices, the human body is capable of reconstituting itself, remaking itself into the image and likeness of God.

Philosophers and Memory

Historically, philosophers have been concerned with the questions: a) What happens when people remember? and, b) How does this remembering provide knowledge of the past? Hackenschmidt's theory of memory departs from these traditional concerns in two ways. While he is interested in how memory comes to be, he rejects all rationalist efforts to explain it. This is to say he sees memory preceding reason, rather than reason as the explanation for memory. Second, he posits a theory sketch of forgetfulness parallel to that of memory. He proposes that forgetting is at least as powerful a mechanism as memory in humans. Then, by a strange twist in logic, he proposes that forgetfulness is indeed a more valued mechanism than memory.

Whereas academic philosophy has wrestled with the question of the epistemic value of memory and the distinction of memory from imagination or delusion, Hackenschmidt accepts a representational view of memory (i.e. that memory does what it purports to do, which is to provide accurate accounts of past events, impressions, etc.,) while rejecting the value of such remembered events in living the life good to live. Memory takes on a negative truth value for Hackenschmidt, not because it is not a true representation of some past event, but rather because it fails to take into consideration the changed circumstances the individual faces in the present. For Hackenschmidt, memory was therefore "artificial" and forgetting "natural."

In the face of 19th century German historicism, it is strange to see Hackenschmidt arguing against memory in this manner. Granted that he was Russian by birth, his paternal ancestors were German. He had to have been influenced by German philosophy during his early years. Hackenschmidt spent most of his later life in England, however, and it is English skepticism that seems to inform his philosophy. Harold Kelly, his editor, may also have influenced him.

Self-Improvement

In his short 1937 essay, "Self-Improvement," Hackenschmidt reveals his deeper philosophic concern for the plight of humankind. He asked his readers to contact him:

> ...May I through its medium [the book's] ask those, and any others who are sympathetically concerned about human welfare and the probable outcome of the present trend of affairs, to get into direct personal touch with me. It is difficult for one human being alone to do much, but even a small group of sincere seekers for the means of true betterment might be able to form a nucleus out of which a new attitude may grow, and become a profound influence for wide-spread human improvement.[12]

For Hackenschmidt, people who seek self-improvement are motivated to do so by a feeling that they are not what they wish themselves to be. They have some concern that they could be otherwise, whether it be in the domain of physical strength or in other areas. When the individual recognizes a need for improvement, three avenues are open: he/she can follow some set of drills; model himself/herself on some particular person and follow his or her routine; or follow his or her own bodily urges toward an improved condition. In the end, he proposes a tailored program of self-improvement based on the unique condition of the individual person. Neither drill nor modeling help develop what Hackenschmidt believes to be the most essential ingredient in self-improvement: "self-reliance." Moreover, he writes: "The greater self-reliance we have, therefore, the higher our general condition must be."[13] Since all life is a struggle, and everything we do is against resistance, then the degree of self-reliance we have will determine how well we do in life

This reasoning leads Hackenschmidt to consider the importance not of the exercises so much as the *attitudes* one brings to them. Adopting a Racine-like skepticism toward society, Hackenschmidt argues that society determines which needs and wants are acceptable and which are not, regardless of what our bodily conditions may be. Society also dictates that we accept specialists' advice about our needs and wants. If we are sick, we seek out a medical doctor. We do not seek the remedy within ourselves, because society has taught us that the expert is a better judge

The sense of imperfection is first felt *within* the person. There is, in other words, an internal awareness of a lack or need. If it is the body that tells us it needs exercise, it

is also to the body we should turn for the type of exercise needed, not some expert. Hackenschmidt grants that our approach to exercise is influenced by our past socialization into exercise. For example. if we trained for a sport while young, those movements will dictate what we think we may need as more mature adults. This is an error, Hackenschmidt warns.

He maintains that the body can teach us, if we only listen. The body possesses an inherent inclination toward proportion and symmetry. What we must do is pay attention to this tendency, even though we have been socialized to exercise in a particular way. The real aim, for Hackenschmidt, lies in "...dismissing the intellect from exercise to the utmost possible extent."[14] This maxim may sound curious coming from a philosopher, but Hackenschmidt's naturalistic philosophy calls for a force for human good that lies beneath social and cultural forms, lodged in the human life force itself.

To the sense of bodily dictation, Hackenschmidt adds the notion of energy. Humans direct energy outward toward the environment, and by so doing transform it. The exerciser must therefore develop a rhythm in exercising, so that the expenditure of energy is smooth and regular, and this must be done by allowing his body to move freely relative to the resistance of the environment Therefore walking up-hill or down will be gauged by the resistance, and a smooth rhythm will result. Thus, so far as possible one ought to exercise in harmony with one's own bodily inclinations, and with a rhythm and pace that fits the body's needs. Just as we stretch without intellectually thinking about stretching so exercise should be as natural an activity as possible.

Hackenschmidt posited a whole moral theory based on a lack of bodily exercise. If a person acted immorally, that behavior was the result of a bad bodily condition. And that bad bodily condition, acting out in improper ways. disregarded the memory of what one was taught would happen (punishment) as a consequence of immoral deeds. The way to prevent crime and immorality, given Hackenschmidt's view, was to look to the physiological conditions that gave rise to anti-social behavior.

Given the fact that Hackenschmidt warns us to listen to our bodily needs, rather than to experts, he places his own teaching in jeopardy. However, he treats this point summarily by saying that while one must listen to one's own inner voice regarding bodily exercise, he (Hackenschmidt) will provide his research and expertise to be considered by the student. Taken in this light, he argues that the information he provides can only help.

Hackenschmidt's naturalism contains a laissez faire view of human life and a rabid anti-intellectualism. In the face of Nazism and Fascism in the 1930s, it makes a certain kind of sense for him to be anti-ideological. Hackenschmidt seems to be interested in preserving a natural human freedom in the face of institutional constraints of society and law. He recognizes the role society has played in making human beings what they are but is reluctant to use community or boosterism as did the other physical culturists who built sanitoria and health clubs to foster fitness. Hackenschmidt's strong regard for individualism elevated it to an ideal that supervenes all else. If we are to self-improve, then Jane Fonda video tapes are not the answer, nor are fitness magazines touting the latest exercise program of Mr. Olympia. Hackenschmidt sees each pupil (and here he retains the teacher-student relationship) as unique.

He argued that the mind could be used to assist the natural bodily processes, but that it could not dictate to the body what changes were to be brought about. Just thinking about exercise would not do the job of building the body.[15]

Hackenschmidt's value theory divides ethics from value. This is to say that right and wrong (ethics) are relative to a society or culture, historic period, etc., while good and bad (value) are determined by how free an individual is in expressing his life force relative to his environs. Life is bad wherever the person is not free to express his life energy. Hackenschmidt's view is that good and bad are universal characteristics and do not vary from one society to the next. His goal is to have each physical culture pupil determine what his or her own condition may be and let the natural inclinations of the body bring about self-improvement in that direction. The processes taken to bring about self-improvement in each person must differ (owing to differing original conditions, structural differences, etc.), but the goal remains the same: to maximize the potential shape, flexibility, agility, health, etc. of each person. He maintains that developing large bulging muscles is not appropriate for every person. Individual differences had to be taken into account in self-improvement.

Regarding nourishment, Hackenschmidt again calls for the body-cell system to dictate to each person what is required. Each person must listen to his "life-power's intelligence." He speaks of the "unfoldment" of the body system. The problem faced by the German philosophers is similar to the one facing Hackenschmidt; i.e., how does one intervene in "natural' developmental processes'? Hackenschmidt's entry point was the assessment of some human deficiency (illness, weakness, etc.). The remediation required a therapy that must tread the line between imposition and enhancement. By paying close attention to bodily (cellular) clues, the physical culturist could self-prescribe a program for development. If you wished to specialize and build up one set of muscles for a sport, Hackenschmidt would criticize this as failing to take into consideration the body's primary drive toward symmetry. Hackenschmidt's recommendation would be to develop the entire bodily system, and let that prepare one for any sport. Much of what he said on this matter seems to be discounted in current coaching circles, although it must be said that symmetry and health became more important to Hackenschmidt than was success in sports, particularly after he retired.

For Hackenschmidt, "true improvement is improvement in the power to live."[6] He wrote:

> And to attain this, nothing has to be added to us either as experience or knowledge. We have all the power within us which will enable us to live at such an intensity of vigor and with such a richness of beauty and grace in our expressions that life as we know it at present would seem a mere torpor by comparison. What is needed is a freeing of the powers of the bodily system so that they may express themselves through us. And this is the only true and lasting improvement which can be obtained, and the attitude that such is the improvement we need, is the only good attitude we can take towards the prospect of rising above the unsatisfactory condition which first impelled us to consider taking exercise in any form.[17]

When Hackenschmidt attempted to summarize his advice to the novice physical culturist he stressed a) that self improvement was to be the improved "power to live," b) that exercise was not an application of something to the body, but rather doing one's best to "free the power of life with which we are endowed," c) that the student should never surrender responsibility for guidance to an outside authority, and d) that in doing exercises, one should let the bodily system dictate what is required, not the mind or an outside authority.[18]

Hackenschmidt strongly cautioned that the entire body needed to be exercised, not just one part of it. He believed in two aspects of humankind: a vital force, which he called "life power," which everyone possessed, and a material body made of muscle and bones, etc. The purpose of exercise was to remove the clogging and debilitating matter from the cells of bone, muscle etc. This clogging matter is there either because it has not been removed before, or because we have allowed it to enter our systems. Proper nourishment was therefore vital, so that no unhealthy matter was injected into the body (alcohol, caffeine, etc.). While Hackenschmidt realized that people could not change entirely the habits of eating, he cautioned that improvements in nutrition could be made gradually.

Central to Hackenschmidt's philosophy was a deep regard for individualism, freedom and the absence of any imposed doctrines. He cautioned against using exercise "contrivances" such as chest expanders, that seemed to exercise the body, but were really not responsive to the inner demands of bodily health. The transformation of the body must begin on the inside and work its way out. It was a slow process, but was rewarding. Hackenschmidt must have had some health or exercise gurus in mind, one of whom was probably Eugen Sandow, when he criticized the use of such devices and programs. Bad habits had to be broken. The body gradually adjusts to such bad habits, and although it rebels at first, gradually it accommodates to them.

Like Macfadden, Hackenschmidt seemed to have abandoned the use of exercise devices, like rubber and spring cables, and dedicated himself to the use of "natural" movements. He asserted again and again that self-improvement through growth and unfolding from within was the only sound means for change. In what is clearly a wrong-headed notion, Hackenschmidt rejected the idea that the muscles could be developed from without. He argued that: "We can develop a limb or a bodily part, or the muscle system generally, but there can be no development of the cell." He believed that for true development to take place, a cellular improvement is needed, and that this can only occur where the bodily system expresses its own intelligence. Memories, the human mind, and bad habits all work against this natural unfoldment. Nothing can be improved without the life power being expressed, and that can only be revitalized from within each of us.

George Hackenschmidt died on February 19, 1968, at the age of 89. Before he died he was quoted as saying: "I wrestled for my credit...and when I left the ring forever, I continued to wrestle for credit in the fields of education and philosophy."[19]

Conclusions

The philosophy Hackenschmidt set forth was clearly unique. For a man who had spent his young adult years as a professional strongman and wrestler, it would be logical for him to cast himself as an authority on exercise. At first he did, but then he rejected this approach and developed a philosophical basis for his belief system. Following his new style, he taught that each person should pay attention to his/her own bodily interests and needs. For a man who had extraordinary strength and agility, he argued that each person was different and the novice physical culturist should copy no exemplars of health and strength. Dedicated to individualism, freedom and self-determination, Hackenschmidt wished these values for all mankind.

The generic causes for Hackenschmidt's philosophy are not easy to determine. He was a gifted strength athlete, but seems to have been almost shy. Certainly he did not boast of his accomplishments. He seems to have considered history and human memories as detriments to true successful living.

As we have seen, there are elements of naturalism and idealism in Hackenschmidt's philosophy, coupled with a popular "unfoldment" philosophy attributed to many 19th century continental thinkers such as Pestalozzi, Froebel and others. It is not so much how Hackenschmidt resembled others, as how he came to be so unique. Every aspect of his philosophy seems foreign to his times. Self-effacement in the light of tremendous political developments such as Nazism and Fascism, British empire-building, etc. With such physical gifts, one would imagine Hackenschmidt adopting a Nietzsche-like "superman" viewpoint, but he did not. Instead, we find a serious and deeply principled man wrestling with his own efforts to determine how he had come to be such an extraordinary physical specimen. The answer could only be that some other force, some "life force," gave him his strength and health. To discover this fundamental fact overrode any desire on his part to impart a theory of exercise that denied it. For Hackenschmidt the body system and life force were clearly powers *sui generis;* left alone they would seek out the proper, healthy road of life. Hack was not formally trained in philosophy, yet his philosophic system was a clear and logical concatenation of his experience and beliefs. He seems to have developed a system of thought that both explained and evolved into a life-worth-living.

Sections of this article will appear in a forthcoming issue of ***Vita Scholastica.***

1. George Hackenschmldt, ***The Russian Lion.*** (Unpublished typescript, n.d.), Hackenschmidt Papers. The Todd-McLean Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.
2. George Hackenschmidt, *The Way to Live: Health and Physical Fitness* (Milo Publishing Company, n.d.) It is believed that this work was published in 1909.
3. Ibid., 15.
4. Ibid., 29.
5. Ibid., 30-31.
6. Ibid., 39.
7. George Hackenschmidt, ***The Three Memories and Forgetfulness: Acquisitions From Without; Life's Opposition From Within.*** (London: Thorson Publishers Ltd., 1937).
8. Ibid., 144-149.
9. Ibid., 153.
10. Ibid.. 154.
11. Hackenschmidt, ***The Way to Live,*** 143.
12. George Hackenschmidt. ***Self-Improvement.*** Edited by Harold Kelly. (London: published by the author, 1937), v.
13. Ibid., 14.
14. Ibid., 28. See also: George Hackenschmidt, ***Attitudes & Their Relation To Human Manifestations.*** Edited by Harold Kelly.(London: published by the author, 1937) for other aspects of Hackenschmidt's views on attitudes.
15. Ibid., 41.
16. Ibld., 52.
17. Ibid., 52-53.
18. Ibid.. 53-54.
19. Scrapbook, Hackenschmidt Papers, Todd-McLean Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.