

Hegel's Universal History

Sir Donald Mackenzi Wallace

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"Among the most important products of this movement in Germany was the Hegelian theory of universal history. According to Hegel's views, which were generally accepted by those who occupied themselves with philosophical questions, universal history was described as "Progress in the consciousness of freedom" (Fortschritt im Bewusstsein der Freiheit). In each period of the world's history, it was explained, some one nation or race had been entrusted with the high mission of enabling the Absolute Reason, or Weltgeist, to express itself in objective existence, while the other nations and races had for the time no metaphysical justification for their existence, and no higher duty than to imitate slavishly the favoured rival in which the Weltgeist had for the moment chosen to incorporate itself. The incarnation had taken place first in the Eastern Monarchies, then in Greece, next in Rome, and lastly in the Germanic race; and it was generally assumed, if not openly asserted, that this mystical Metempsychosis of the Absolute was now at an end. The cycle of existence was complete. In the Germanic peoples the Weltgeist had found its highest and final expression."

Mackenzi Wallace, Donald, Russia Bd. 2, London, Paris, New York & Melbourne 1905, S. 49f