

Title: Bakunin and the History of Russian Realism
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Bakunin's contribution to the development of Russian Realism has been particularly undervalued: we are more familiar with images of Bakunin as a perpetual adolescent, as a purveyor of empty philosophical abstractions, as a prototype for the so-called "superfluous" generation of Russian Idealists. Yet if we are to expand our understanding of Realism—not only as a literary style, but as a more sweeping *social phenomenon* in Russian history—we need to re-examine Bakunin's crucial role as the first Russian intellectual to expound a Hegelian conception of Reality.

Accordingly, this paper will focus primarily on Bakunin's early philosophical articles from 1838 and 1840 (before he left Russia)—particularly those aspects that will influence Belinsky (who was most responsible for promoting literary Realism) and Herzen (who first inculcated Realism into Russian Socialist doctrine). For one thing, this involves a substantial reinterpretation of the well-known polemic between Bakunin and Belinsky, their "reconciliation with Reality." Whereas Lydia Ginzburg and others have portrayed Bakunin as the "romantic," the antagonist to Belinsky's "realism," it was Bakunin who actually laid the conceptual foundations for the subsequent development of Realism by: 1) dissociating the theoretical understanding of Reality from the empirically self-evident, 2) introducing a historicist conception of Realism as the synthesizing end-product of European intellectual development, 3) linking Reality's objective existence to the mechanisms of social power. These basic characteristics (developed further by Belinsky and Herzen) will, in turn, establish Realism as Russia's guiding impetus for forcing its way into "world history"—first, through literature and, ultimately, through the "liberation movement."

In closing, the paper will consider the discrepancy between Bakunin's actual intellectual contributions and the most famous (alleged) literary representations of his persona: in Turgenev's *Rudin* and Dostoevsky's *Demons*. In actuality, the Russian Realist novel is fundamentally indebted to the "idealism" it ostensibly debunks.