The commentaries of Jean-Paul Depretto, Lewis Siegelbaum, Michael David-Fox, Yoram Gorlizki, and Randall A. Poole raise more questions than I will be able to address. In the spirit of e-Samokritika, I want to focus here on those I find either most troublesome or most inspiring. But first let me reiterate the two central points of the essay. It argues that there is an alternative way to think about the history of our discipline; rather than juxtaposing different generations or proclaiming a succession of "paradigm shifts," we can read this history as the unfolding of a research agenda attempting to understand the complexity of Soviet society. At the end of the essay I then propose to conceptualize Soviet society as a dynamic system of relations between people which has a variety of foci of integration--nodal points of social relations, including religions, ethnicities, the family and kinship, the state, friendship, networks (others could be added); if we observe this dynamic system through time, we can write a history of social integration and disintegration.

1. The *longue durée*

I agree with David-Fox and Siegelbaum that, ultimately, it would be fascinating to put a complex history of Stalinist society into the *longue durée*, i.e., into a diachronic context both backwards and forwards in time. I hasten to add, however, that I find this prospect altogether too daunting at this point. In the medium term, what I will try to do is something more modest--to see if I can put the manifesto to work in a book-length history of Stalinist society.

2. A consensus?

Yoram Gorlizki claims that "most historians of the Soviet Union would not disagree" with any of my theses. If this is, empirically speaking, true--so much the better. I do fear, however, that Gorlizki takes his own "truisms" (which I obviously share) as those of the profession as a whole--or I just had too many conversations with a minority of dissenters. Be this as it may, the article has not made very strong claims to novelty in the first place. Rather, it tried to recover
trying to proclaim "yet another paradigm shift" but point to commonalities and compatibilities in what is sometimes seen as mutually exclusive. In doing so, I tried to give past approaches a "friendly" reading, focusing on what I find helpful in them, rather than what irritates. I tried to, simultaneously, write a "manifesto against reductionism in Soviet history" (David-Fox) and to open "the path to a cumulative history that relies more on the truths of past research" (Depretto, 375). Siegelbaum rightly points to weak spots in the Harvard Project, and Depretto and Poole to those in Kotkin--but then the point was not to repeat past criticism but to tease out a positive tradition.

3. Political religion

I agree with Randall Poole that there's a long history to the notion that Bolshevism was a "political religion." Given that he has provided a much more detailed genealogy of the idea than I could have done, I do not need to add much here, other than maybe that there is a "Western" history as well. In 1938, Eric Voegelin subsumed National Socialism and Bolshevism under the term (K.G. Riegel in Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions 6, 1 [2005]: 118 n. 6). J. L. Talmon (The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy [London, 1955]) wrote of "secular Messianism" and the "modern secular religion of totalitarian democracy," whose origins he followed back--like later Martin Malia and Stephen Kotkin--to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Hannah Arendt's discussion of the function of ideology in totalitarian movements also fits into this tradition, even if she did not--I believe--use the term "political religion." The notion also did not disappear later in the twentieth century. For example, Geoffrey Hosking pointed in 1985 both to the religious character of Stalinism and its limits as a theological Ersatz:

In some respects the Stalinist ideology resembled a religion. It claimed to understand the whole of human nature and indeed, in the form of 'dialectical materialism', the whole of the universe. It was backed by rituals and ceremonials that were partially reminiscent of religious ones. Yet, because it was essentially a political and economic doctrine, it failed to fill some of the main functions of a religion. (A History of the Soviet Union, 1st ed. [London, 1985], 221)

It seems to me that it is fruitful to think of Bolshevist theocracy as one aspect of the Stalinist Behemoth. As we know from the "Soviet subjectivity" literature, there were many Bolshevist "believers" in Soviet society. But we should not over-stress this point. As a guide to policy formulation, the ideological element certainly waxed and waned. Moreover, it was always counter-balanced by the strong pragmatic streak of Bolshevism--part of the ideology was, after all, that
institution where "Bolshevik religion" played the largest role, surely, was the state church, a.k.a. the Bolshevik party. But it was by no means the only epicenter of supra-natural beliefs, given that so many remained (and some became) Christians of various description, Muslims, Jews, etc. etc.. With 57 percent of the population (16 years and older) claiming to be religious "believers" in the census of 1937, clearly religions other than Bolshevism were important (cf. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 204). Like everywhere else, there is considerable "overlap" and "interaction" here, too. Believers of rival religions were a constant headache within the party, and constant purging of such "backward elements" could not keep the party clean for long. To my mind the most interesting question in this regard is why and how all of these rival beliefs survived despite the anti-religious character of the ruling regime. This might again point to the "limits of state power" (see below) but Hosking's remark that Bolshevism was a deficient doctrine with regards to explaining the meaning of life and death might have played a role as well. A lot of interesting work remains to be done on religious belief, religious practice, and religious organization--some of it research underway at the moment.

4. The state

Two of the respondents point to my lack of interest in the state. David-Fox notes that my stress of the relative independence of the "non-state" might be read as falling back into the state/society framework—a dichotomy I try to escape. Somewhat complementary to this critique, Gorlizki claims that the concept of the "state" is completely underdeveloped in the article (although it is "defined," in a rather abstract fashion, on 364).

When I wrote this article (it developed from 2002 or so, and was finished in 2005), I was, indeed, irritated by what I saw as a too strong focus in our discipline on "the state," which in many analyses seemed to swallow all of society rather than being one part of it. At the time, I was working on a history of Soviet veterans as a social unit, which I soon understood to exist whether or not it was recognized by the state. To write the history of how veterans reintegrated into civilian life and how they reproduced an understanding of their entitlement despite the state's attempts to convince them otherwise, I needed a detailed understanding of all kinds of social institutions beyond "the state." For this history I did not need to unpack the state too much--I needed to know about the government policies, the party's approach to veterans, and the extend to which various mass organizations, enterprises, or
but I did not need a detailed knowledge of the Soviet Behemoth itself. The "state" was at the periphery of the history of what I came to call the "entitlement group" of veterans.

I am now starting to work on a history of Stalinist society and as a result have developed a more keen interest in "the state." (Re-)reading the work of Oleg Khlevniuk, Yoram Gorlizki, E. A. Rees, James Harris, Stephen Wheatcroft and others shows a far more intriguing beast than I had expected. I'm not trying to pull a Foucault on my critics here ("I'm no longer the same Edele as two years ago!"), but rather explain the lacunae in the essay--I would probably write it differently today. Even so, I wonder how I could have devoted more space to an exploration of the state within the confines of an article devoted to something essentially different. After all, I also did not develop a detailed account of "the family," "friendship", "networks," etc. Rather, I tried to make an argument for a project, which I hope to follow through in the future--to write "a dynamic social history that looks both at the processes that pulled Soviet society together and those that tore it apart" (370).

5. Force fields other than the state

Despite my reflex to focus on the "non-state" (my "instinct to downplay the role of the state," as David-Fox puts it nicely, pointing to my indebtedness to "revisionism"), I believe that the essay does not reify the category into something akin to the "society" in the state/society framework. Rather, my reading is that it attempts to unpack it through the notion of "foci of integration"--a more de-centralized way to talk about the Soviet social formation. Indeed, while I do argue against what I see as the reduction of the field of social relations to the effect of state action and discourses in the sentence David-Fox quotes, I summarize my vision of Soviet society as "clustered around several foci of integration such as the state, family and kinship, ethnicities and religions (including but not limited to Bolshevism), and networks of reciprocal exchange and friendship" (369)--hardly a dichotomous conception. The stress on "the limits of the state and the forces independent of it" belongs in the context of the polemic with what I see as the artificial state-centeredness of Kotkin's approach, which constantly breaks down when confronted with the messiness of real life in Magnitogorsk. I do think we need to allow for spaces, social relations, and ideas at the periphery and at times outside of the field of state power. Instead some contexts are better understood within the realm of another of the many "force fields" (to use Siegelbaum's term)--which of the many fields a
within the context of concrete, empirical research, not in the realm of theory. Overlap and intersection of the fields of power radiating from the many foci of integration does not imply coincidence or congruence. The life of sectarians, what happened inside the peasant hut, what happened on the shop floor of a factory, and even what happened within the party as well was influenced strongly by the kinds of socio-cultural forces which revisionists would have seized upon to show that the totalitarian Behemoth was limping. And I continue to think that they were right--the problem is with the dichotomy of state vs. society, not with the notion that the state was not everywhere and not the only force of social integration.

6. Social structure, class, and status

I generally agree with Depretto's discussion of the centrality of "status groups" in Soviet society--a point also made by Fitzpatrick in much of her work from the 1990s onwards (culminating in many ways in Tear Off the Masks!). However, I would not like to see "class" (or "economic position") go out of the window as an analytical category in the process. While in many instances economic position followed officially prescribed status, as Depretto discusses in detail, it did not always. One's access to scarce goods could be enhanced by refusing a high-status occupation and accepting a low status one instead. Such was the case with people who after the war refused to return to their skilled professions but became unskilled laborers in trade or in bread factories instead. At the extreme end of the spectrum, black marketeers certainly did not enjoy an elevated official status, but their economic position (i.e. their access to scarce goods) was extremely high. In many ways, this is just a reiteration of the general line of my essay, only applied to social stratification--if we focus on the state and the results of its policies alone, we will miss the complexity of the social formation. Even in the Soviet context--a society where much was under state guidance--we need class and status, both defined in a Weberian, rather than a Marxist manner, to understand social stratification. If we "renounce the notion of class" (Depretto, 388), we cripple our analytic ability.

This leads to the question what "social structure" is, in the first place--Gorlizki would "liked to have found out more about what this 'structure' actually consists of." All I can offer is a synonym--"patterns." We can distinguish between at least three kinds of "patterns"--psychological (relatively stable personality traits and beliefs), social (relatively stable sets of relations between people), and cultural patterns (relatively stable sets of ideas, symbols, and
"internalized" by individuals). My essay focused on recovering basic frameworks for research on social patterns, with some side-remarks on the other two types of structures. The goal was to come up with a relatively abstract framework for analysis, not a model of Soviet society or strong empirical propositions. This will only show its use (or otherwise), once put to work in empirical research. Independent of such research, I do not think I can go beyond the "groping" statements provided in the essay. It seems to me that the source of at least part of Gorlizki's irritation is that he finds the level of abstraction meaningless--while others, including myself, find thinking about our "truisms" helpful.