In this response to my critics, I amplify the conceptual clarification and methodological stipulation of habitus begun in “Homines in Extremis” to help us move from a sociology of the body as socially constructed object to a sociology from the body as socially constructing vector of knowledge, power, and practice. The specification of habitus by membership in collectives, attachment to institutions, and analytic purpose makes it a flexible multiscalar notion with which to construct the epistemic individual and account for both, reproduction and change, conformity and creativity, as well as self-revision. For this, we must reject theological interpretations that rigidly lock habitus into Bourdieu’s framework; avoid conflating the formal properties of the notion with its concrete features in specific settings and cases; and distinguish between the rhetorical invocation of his concepts (“speaking Bourdieuese”) and their effective deployment in the construction of the empirical object. As embodied and embedded capacity, habitus brings temporality, depth, and desire to the analytic epicenter. It reminds us that the social world is not transparent, open-ended, and instantaneous, but endowed with gravity, opacity, and asymmetry. Treating the sentient and skilled organism as fount of both social intelligence and sociological acumen can help historical social science connect with enactive psychology and recover the carnality of action that conventional accounts of social life routinely erase.

Keywords