Comments on McWilliams's "In Favor of Epistemic Reasons for Action"

- In "In Favor of Epistemic Reasons for Action," Dr. McWilliams rejects the evidentialist distinction between epistemic reasons for belief and practical reasons for actions, and argues that there can be epistemic reasons for action. McWilliams's argument proceeds in two major stages: First, M defends the notion that we sometimes have epistemic reasons to engage in cognitive action; Second, M defends the notion that there is no relevant difference between cognitive and bodily action, such that if the evidentialist accepts epistemic reasons for the former, then she should also accept them for the latter.

- I have two major comments. The first concerns the dialectic effect of M's argument for C1 - that an agent sometimes has epistemic reasons to engage in a cognitive action. While I find M's defense of the second (2) and P2 plausible, it's unclear to me why exactly we should expect the evidentialist to dispute these premises. The thought seems to that the evidentialist is after a theory of justification, understood as an impersonal and synchronic property of an agent's belief. But that leaves open the possibility of a theory of the etiology of a belief, understood as a separate matter, that's both compatible with the evidentialist's theory of justification but also accommodates epistemic reasons for cognitive activity. So in short, I'd like to hear M's further thoughts on why, if at all, the evidentialist of Conee and Feldman's stripe should take issue with C1 and its supporting considerations.

- My second comment concerns the strength of M's argument for C2 - that if an agent can have epistemic reason to engage in cognitive action, then she can have such reason to engage in bodily action. Overall, the burden-shifting argument deployed in favor of C2 strikes me as the least forceful set of considerations in favor of the paper's overall conclusion, for two reasons. First, it's not clear what would count as a relevant difference that the evidentialist could point that would satisfy the demand. And this appears to be because, second, the examples M provides to support P3 are not just any bodily action; they're bodily actions described as intentionally directed toward the formation of a belief. We might therefore think that the epistemic reason in question is only derivatively a reason for a bodily action - derivative, that is, to the extent to which it is a reason for forming a belief. I wonder if there are cases M can provide in which a bodily action is not merely weakly supported (or permitted) by an epistemic reason, but is more strongly supported (or required) of an agent who accepts an epistemic reason supporting that action.

- I hope these comments offer M an opportunity to say more about their considered position, and hope they contribute to constructive discussion in the Q&A.