*Fictionalist approaches to philosophical theories*

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This paper reconfigures how we are to understand fictionalism – or, more precisely, one widely popular form of it. It assesses some would-be fictionalist projects in the light of this reconfiguration. The paper has four main sections. Section 2 recommends a certain way of understanding what counts as one kind of fictionalist account of a given topic. It draws on a familiar distinction between epistemic and pragmatic reasons. Section 3 specifies the role of the notion of fiction in the light of this account. The role is downgraded and the notion is assigned only a heuristic function. Section 4 discusses a condition on a genuine fictionalist account, as so understood, of a given topic – namely, that the account needs to deliver some independently identifiable benefit. Some exemplars are noted. A case study is then given of a would-be fictionalist account that fails to meet this condition. Section 5 generalises this finding and addresses the prospects of a fictionalist account of philosophical theories.