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| **Meeting title:** Fictionalist approaches to philosophical theories |
| **Date:** 17.4.2025.  |
| **Time:** 18.00 |
| **Place:** Zoom |
| **Zoom link:** Filozofija Doktorski is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.Join Zoom Meeting[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89487929029?pwd=UXlZFcic1emSVt1S2NipofSE2YS4io.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89487929029?pwd=UXlZFcic1emSVt1S2NipofSE2YS4io.1" \t "_blank)Meeting ID: 894 8792 9029Passcode: 205741 |
| **Duration:** 1 hour and 40 minutes |
| **Participants:** Christopher Daly, Boran Berčić, Matija Rajter, Danica Radoš, Vito Balorda, Miloš Panajotov |
| **Agenda:**1. Christopher Daly delivered the talk “Fictionalist approaches to philosophical theories”
2. Discussion, questions and comments
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| **Meeting summary:** On Thursday 17.4.2024. the MetPhil project team gathered to conduct their tenth workshop. The topic of the workshop was a talk given by Christopher Daly titled “Fictionalist approaches to philosophical theories”. In the first part of the workshop Daly delivered his talk in which he tried to reconfigure the way in which we understand the framework of fictionalism. The second part of the workshop was dedicated to a Q&A session where the audience presented their questions and comments to the author. |
| **Talk summary:**Daly mentions the distinction between epistemic and pragmatic reasons; epistemic reasons for P concern whether you should believe that P, pragmatic reasons for P are concerned with whether P has payoff. To assess P in terms of epistemic reasons is to assess P in terms of the norm of truth, to assess it in terms of pragmatic reasons is to assess it in terms of a norm that governs means-end reasoning. The distinction between epistemic and pragmatic reasons maps onto the distinction between belief and acceptance which is of great importance to the fictionalist.Christopher Daly thinks that the role of fiction specified in his account of fictionalism should be downgraded and seen as primarily serving a heuristic function. This goes against a significant number of fictionalist who would claim that a key to understanding fictionalism is treating a theory of, say, mathematics as fiction in the usual sense of the word. One of the reasons why we should be tempted to sever the parallels between fictionalism and fiction is because these parallels are sometimes controversial and a target for sustained criticism. If the fictionalist severs these parallels and downgrades the role of fiction to a purely heuristic one then he avoids this type of criticism entirely. The only point of similarity we should be interested in between the notion of fiction in fictionalism and in fictional discourse is that in treating a set of propositions as fiction we are not concerned with the truth values of these propositions; the analogy with fiction need go no further.Some fictionalists think that this is mistaken. They claim that only when fictional elements play a genuine role in an approach to a philosophical subject can that approach be characterized as fictionalist. Daly, however, thinks that his view of the role of fiction within fictionalism has a historical precedent.As the author sees it, a fictionalist account has three components: a problem, a policy, and a payoff. The payoffs are secured only if the policy can be set aside, and the payoffs could still be identifiable.If there aren’t epistemic reasons supporting propositions of a given topic you don’t need to believe those propositions. But if you use those propositions you have to expect a payoff that they will yield, you should have some pragmatic reasons.Questions and Comments**Berčić*** The author claims that philosophical theories or entities do not have explanatory value. Since they don’t have explanatory value we do not have pragmatic reasons to accept philosophical theories in a fictionalist sense. Is this correct?
* It seems plausible to be a fictionalist about lets say universals, but we could argue that they are still intellectually useful, they have explanatory power, they enable certain classifications etc.
* It seems that the claim that DNA represents a chain of information is a kind of metaphorical speech.
* We are talking about the utility of theories or of fictions. But paradigmatic cases of fictions are games like chess of cards, and it is not clear in what way they are useful. Their consequences in seem limited in real life.
* Intuitively we would say that we have knowledge about chess, even if the game of chess is a kind of fiction. If we can have knowledge in chess, then we can have knowledge in mathematics.
* The author introduces the distinction between *believe that P* and *believe that P is true*. It looks like it is a conceptual truth that to believe that P is just to believe that P is true. How does the author respond to this?
* Generally, what does the author think about the prospects of fictionalism in philosophy?

**Balorda*** Biologists usually talk a lot about information, signals etc. Some philosophers interpret this information talk as a kind of fiction so we can understand better what is happening in biology at the ontological level. What does the author think about fictions as an explanatory tool being used in the domain of biology?

**Rajter*** How does the author understand the main motivation for fictionalism? Is it because it enables us to posit a more favorable ontology, or is it because the discourse of say mathematics is more fruitfully interpreted within a fictionalist framework, which would be the thesis of hermeneutic fictionalists, or is it understood purely in terms of payoffs that you were talking about?
* Would it not be more elegant to adopt a pragmatist framework regarding truth once we start talking about theory payoffs?
* One of the reasons why we are not necessarily interested in applying fictionalism to philosophical theories is because there is no utility to be gained from this move. But what about the doctrine of Pyrrhonian skepticism? Can we not interpret this doctrine in a fictionalist spirit and still derive a tangible benefit or utility from it?
* The author claims that in the fictionalism he is presenting he would avoid using formulations such as pretending, make-believe etc. Mark Balaguer, when situating his views in a fictionalist framework, relies on the formulation “for-all-practical-purposes-true”. Would the author accept this kind of formulation?
* Would the author agree that there are no parallels between the talk that is going on within the framework of a novel or a story on one hand, and talk within the framework of mathematics on the other?
* Would the authors say that there is a difference between the dispositions we can ascribe to an agent who merely accepts that P against someone who truly believes that P?

**Radoš*** Under this framework does Hartry Field’s nominalism qualify as epistemically or pragmatically motivated, or both?
* What would be the limits of fictionalism in philosophy in the authors opinion?
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