In Defense of Religious Practicalism

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Abstract
Religious fictionalism holds that religious sentences are false, that religious practitioners accept rather than believe religious sentences, and that it is justifiable for them to act on religious sentences. I develop an alternative to religious fictionalism, which I call "religious practicalism." It holds that we do not know whether religious sentences are true or false, that religious practitioners believe rather than merely accept religious sentences, and that it is justifiable for them to act on religious sentences. I argue that religious practicalism has intellectual, moral, and practical advantages over religious fictionalism.

Keywords
Acceptance, Belief, Epistemic Reciprocalism, Pascal's Wager, Religious Fictionalism

1. Introduction

Fictionalism can be found in several fields of philosophy, such as the philosophy of mathematics, meta-ethics, and the philosophy of religion. Mathematical fictionalism holds that mathematical discourse is a fiction, so "mathematical theories are not true" (Balaguer, 2018). Moral fictionalism holds that moral discourse is a fiction, so "moral assertions are typically untrue" (Joyce, 2005: 287). Religious fictionalism holds that religious discourse is a fiction, so religious sentences are false. It also claims that religious practitioners[1] accept, but do not believe, religious sentences, and it is legitimate for them to act on religious sentences.

Religious fictionalism has advantages and disadvantages, as two survey articles (Scott, 2017; Scott and Malcolm, 2018) note. This paper aims to expose five new disadvantages of it and to defend an alternative account of religious discourse, which I call "religious practicalism." It holds that we do not know whether religious sentences are true or false, that religious practitioners believe rather than merely accept religious sentences, and that it is justifiable for them to act on religious sentences.

The outline of the present paper is as follows. I spell out religious fictionalism and display two advantages of it in Section 2. In Section 3, I unfold five new disadvantages of it. In Section 4, I enunciate religious practicalism and display the five advantages of it over religious fictionalism. In Section 5, I reply to a possible objection that religious practicalism depicts religious practitioners as being dogmatic, and then respond to religious fictionalists' possible new position that we do not know whether religious sentences are true or false.

This paper should be of interest to those who wonder what we ought to make of religious sentences and practitioners, i.e., whether we can attribute false religious beliefs to religious practitioners, whether religious practitioners believe religious sentences, and whether it is justifiable for them to behave as if religious sentences are true. This paper does not concern how we should interpret metaphors and allegories in religious language. Readers interested in this topic are referred to Michael Sell (1994) and Denys Turner (1998).

[1] In this paper, religious practitioners are those who act on religious sentences. It is under dispute between religious fictionalists and practicalists whether they accept or believe religious sentences.

2. Religious Fictionalism

Religious fictionalism is composed of the following three theses: (i) Religious sentences are false. (ii) Religious practitioners accept rather than believe religious sentences. In other words, religious practitioners "accept but do not believe what they say when engaging in religious discourse" (Scott, 2017). (iii) It is justifiable for religious practitioners to act on religious sentences. To put it another way, "it is morally and intellectually legitimate to affirm religious sentences without believing the content of what is said" (Scott and Malcolm, 2018: 1). The first thesis is clear, whereas the second and third theses are not. Let me clarify the two opaque theses one by one.

When religious fictionalists contend that religious practitioners accept rather than believe religious sentences, they have in mind Jonathan Cohen's (1992) conceptions of belief and acceptance. According to Cohen, to believe a proposition is to *feel* that it is true, but to accept it is to commit to use it "for deciding what to do or think in a particular context" (Cohen, 1992: 4). Consider, for example, the proposition that a defendant is not guilty. On Cohen's account, a lawyer can accept it, and that as a result, she can behave in court as if it is true, although she does not believe it. In short, she can pretend to believe that her defendant is not guilty. There is no behavioral difference between accepters and believers of a proposition. There is only a mental difference between them, viz., believers feel, whereas acceptors do not, that the proposition is true.

On the religious fictionalist account, just as the lawyer only need to accept that her defendant is not guilty to behave as if her defendant is not guilty, so religious practitioners only need to accept religious sentences to behave as if religious sentences are true. In other words, the belief that God exists is not required for religious practitioners to behave as if religious sentences are true any more than the belief that the defendant is not guilty is required for the lawyer to behave in court as if the defendant is not guilty.

Recall that the third thesis of religious fictionalism states that "it is morally and intellectually legitimate to affirm religious sentences without believing the content of what is said" (Scott and Malcolm, 2018: 1). In other words, it is legitimate for religious practitioners to behave as if religious sentences are true, even though they do not believe them. Consider, for example, the religious sentence, "God loves us." Religious fictionalists maintain that this sentence is false, but that it is intellectually and morally legitimate for religious practitioners to act on it. After all, they can enjoy practical benefits from behaving as if it is true. The practical benefits include strengthening social bonds within religious groups and possibly going to heaven.

What motivates religious fictionalism? There is no convincing argument for religious beliefs, but there are strong objections, such as the problem of evil, to religious beliefs. Hence, religious beliefs are false. Yet, philosophers of religion can avoid attributing false beliefs to religious practitioners, if they embrace religious fictionalism according to which religious practitioners accept rather than believe religious sentences. We ought not to attribute false beliefs to our target agents, *ceteris paribus*. Moreover, philosophers of religion can avoid attributing immorality and intellectual irrationality to religious practitioners. Other things being equal, we ought not to attribute such negative properties to our target agents.

3. Criticisms

3.1. Pascal's Wager

This subsection explores how Pascalians would respond to religious fictionalism. I argue that they would reject it on the grounds that it precludes the possibility that believers go to heaven.

Pascal's Wager holds that there is no strong argument for the existence of God, but that we should *believe* in him because it is possible that he rewards believers with eternal bliss in heaven. Some critics of Pascal's Wager object that it is psychologically impossible to believe in him in the absence of a convincing argument for his existence. Pascal replies that we will acquire belief in God by engaging in religious discourse for a long time. This reply implies that acting as if religious sentences are true can be a means to arrive at belief in God, which in turn implies that pretending to believe in God is not enough, and that we should actually believe in God to go to heaven. In other words, what will take us to heaven is "belief in God, not mere pretence belief" (Olson, 2014: 192).

Pascal's Wager and religious fictionalism do not go hand in hand. According to Pascal's Wager, it is belief in God, not acceptance in God, that will take religious practitioners to heaven, i.e., you have to *feel* that God exists to go to heaven. (Hermeneutic) religious fictionalism, however, asserts that religious practitioners do not *believe* religious sentences, which implies that they do not have a chance to go to heaven, even if heaven exists. Moreover, religious fictionalism asserts that religious sentences are false, so heaven does not exist. Consequently, we can conclude that religious fictionalism casts a damper on Pascalians' aspirations for heaven.

Recall that religious fictionalism has the advantage that philosophers of religion can avoid attributing false beliefs, immorality, and intellectual irrationality to religious practitioners. It turns out, however, that this advantage comes with the disadvantage of ruling out the possibility that religious practitioners go to heaven and the possibility that philosophers of religion depict religious practitioners as having the chance to go to heaven. Therefore, philosophers of religion should weigh the advantage and the disadvantage before embracing religious fictionalism.

Religious fictionalists would object that Pascal's Wager is contentious, hence I should justify it before appealing to it to undermine religious fictionalism. Admittedly, this request is reasonable. Complying with it, however, would lead us far afield, given that Pascal's Wager is a huge topic in the philosophy of religion. Suffice it to say here that this paper assumes, along with Pascal's Wager, that it is practically rational to believe in God as long as there is a non-zero probability that God sends believers to heaven, and that it is not an easy task to prove that the probability is zero.

3.2. Dilemma

Let me construct a dilemma against religious fictionalists. As we saw in Section 2, they contend that religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences. How about nonreligious sentences? Do they also merely accept nonreligious sentences? Religious fictionalists can either say that religious practitioners merely accept nonreligious sentences, or that religious practitioners believe nonreligious sentences. Both answers are problematic.

On the one hand, if religious fictionalists say that religious practitioners merely accept nonreligious sentences, they are implying that religious practitioners merely accept even sentences like "I exist." But how can they merely accept that they exist? How can they not feel that they exist? In my view, their existence is so clear to them that they cannot help believing that they exist, and that they cannot merely accept that they exist. Moreover, the fact that they accept that they exist shows that they exist. They are committing a contradiction when they say that they do not exist, but that they merely accept that they exist. Therefore, religious fictionalists have no choice but to say that religious practicalists believe that they exist.

On the other hand, if religious fictionalists say that religious practitioners believe nonreligious sentences, religious fictionalists have the burden of explicating the relevant

difference between religious and nonreligious sentences that entitles them to say that religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences but believe nonreligious sentences. For example, what is the relevant difference between "God exists" and "I am smarter than average"? Moreover, there are tricky sentences, such as "Don't commit adultery" and "Respect your parents." Are these sentences religious or nonreligious? The existence of such sentences shows that it is a challenging task to draw a line between religious and nonreligious sentences.

In sum, religious fictionalists have either the burden of explaining how religious practitioners can even not feel that they exist, i.e., how religious practitioners can even not believe that they exist, or the burden of explicating the relevant difference between religious and nonreligious sentences that would entitle them to say that religious practitioners accept the former and believe the latter, and the burden of drawing a line between religious and nonreligious sentences.

3.3. Intellectually and Morally Legitimate?

Recall that according to religious fictionalism, "it is morally and intellectually legitimate to affirm religious sentences without believing the content of what is said" (Scott and Malcolm, 2018: 1). In other words, it is justifiable merely to accept religious sentences and then to act on them. I dispute this normative claim in this subsection.

When we speak what we do not believe, the following four problems arise. The first one is Moore's paradox. It occurs whenever we speak a sentence of the structure, "P, but I don't believe p" or "P, but I believe not p" (Moore, 1993: 207–212). An example is "Water is H_2O, but I don't believe water is H_2O." Suppose that scientific antirealists say, "Spacetime shrank and expanded here a minute ago because two black holes were combined in a distance region of space a billion years ago," to explain why spacetime shrank and expanded in a certain place, but they add, "But I don't believe spacetime shrank and expanded here a minute ago because two black holes were combined in a distance region of space a billion years ago," to let their audience know that they are antirealists. Scientific antirealists would be caught in Moore's paradox, and what they say would puzzle their audience (Park, 2018a: 33). This criticism against scientific antirealists applies no less to religious practitioners who merely accept religious sentences. Suppose that there are atheists, and that they speak as if they were religious practitioners. They accept the religious sentence, "God loves you," and say to you, "God loves you." You ask them whether they believe that God loves me. Since they are atheists, they would answer, "But I don't believe God loves you." As a result, they would be caught in Moore's paradox, and what they say would puzzle you.

The second problem is the problem of disconcerting questions. Suppose that scientific antirealists, who disbelieve scientific theories, speak as if scientific theories are true. Despite disbelieving general relativity, for instance, they say, "Spacetime shrank and expanded here a minute ago because two black holes were combined in a distance region of space a billion years ago." Their audience might ask them the following disconcerting questions: "Do you believe what you just said? If you don't, why should I believe what you don't? How can you say to me what you don't believe? Do you expect me to believe what you don't?" (Park, 2019a: 155). This criticism against scientific antirealists applies no less to religious practitioners who merely accept religious sentences but speak as if they believe religious sentences. Suppose that they say to you, "God loves you." You can ask the disconcerting questions to them.

The third problem is the problem of deceptive speech acts. When we speak sentences that we do not believe, we are pretending to believe them, and hence our speech acts are deceptive to our audience. Why are deceptive speech acts immoral?

> Imagine, for example, that there is a successful televangelist. He persuaded millions of television viewers into Christianity. It later turns out, however, that he is a thorough atheist. He just spoke as if he were a theist. He said, for example, "God loves you," although he did not believe that God exists. His speech acts did not match up with doxastic states! In such circumstances, the converted would feel that they were deceived, and that his speech acts were unethical. (Park, 2014: 432)

The televangelist cannot escape from the moral blame by saying that he accepted religious sentences for the purpose of doing his job. The fact that he accepted religious sentences only shows that religious fictionalists owe us an account of when it is permissible and impermissible to accept religious sentences.

The fourth problem might be called "the problem of mistrust." If you merely accept certain sentences, your epistemic colleagues might lose trust in you, and as a result, they might no longer believe what you say (Park, 2018a: 36). If your epistemic colleagues do not believe what you say, you might suffer from epistemic and pragmatic disadvantages (Park, 2019b: 97). For example, you cannot propagate your positive theories to your epistemic colleagues, and they might refuse to grant you scholarly awards for your positive theories on the grounds that they do not believe your positive theories.

How do the four problems relate to religious fictionalism? Religious fictionalism claims that religious practitioners do not believe religious sentences, but they rather accept religious sentences. Therefore, we can conclude that religious fictionalism attributes the four problems to religious practitioners. Religious fictionalism also claims that it is intellectually and morally legitimate for religious practitioners to accept religious sentences and then to act on them. However, the four problems indicate that it is intellectually and morally illegitimate to do so.

3.4. Better Epistemic Access?

According to religious fictionalism, religious practitioners "accept but do not believe what they say when engaging in religious discourse" (Scott, 2017). Suppose, however, that religious practitioners protest that they feel that religious sentences are true. They insist that they believe religious sentences, just as they believe nonreligious sentences like "Electrons exist" and "Snow is white." They add that they do not merely accept religious sentences any more than they merely accept nonreligious sentences. Under such a condition, it is not clear what grounds religious fictionalists have for denying that religious practitioners believe religious sentences.

Religious fictionalists do not have better epistemic access to religious practitioners' mental states than the practitioners themselves do. A cognitive agent has better epistemic access to her own mental state than anyone else does (Goldman, 1993). For example, the hunger sensation that occurs in a cognitive agent's mind is better known to her than to anyone else. This common knowledge in epistemology implies that religious practitioners know better about whether they believe or merely accept religious sentences than religious fictionalists do.

In response to this criticism, religious fictionalists might jettison the descriptive thesis that religious practitioners accept, rather than believe, religious sentences, and then fall back on the normative thesis that religious practitioners *should* merely accept religious sentences. This normative thesis avoids the objection that religious practitioners have better epistemic access to their own mental states than religious fictionalists.

The normative thesis, however, is also vulnerable to the objections introduced in Subsections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 above. To be specific: (i) If religious practitioners merely accept

religious sentences, they would not have the chance to go to heaven, as noted in Subsection 3.1. Thus, religious fictionalists need to explain why religious practitioners should give up the chance to go to heaven. (ii) If religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences, they would have to explain how they can even not feel that they exist, or have to explicate the relevant difference between religious and nonreligious sentences that entitle them merely to accept religious sentences but to believe nonreligious sentences, as we have seen in Subsection 3.2. Hence, religious fictionalists have the burden of explaining why religious practitioners should put themselves in this dilemma. (iii) If religious practitioners merely accept a religious sentence, they would run into the four problems unpacked in Subsection 3.3. Accordingly, religious fictionalists owe us an explanation of why religious practitioners should face those four problems.

3.5. Epistemic Reciprocalism

Let me introduce a position called "epistemic reciprocalism" in the philosophy of science literature. It holds that "we ought to treat our epistemic colleagues, as they treat their epistemic agents" (Park, 2017a: 57). Epistemic reciprocalists believe scientific realists' positive philosophical theories on the grounds that scientific realists believe scientists' theories. By contrast, epistemic reciprocalists disbelieve scientific antirealists' positive philosophical theories on the grounds that scientific antirealists disbelieve scientists' theories.

What does epistemic reciprocalism have to do with the present topic? Religious practitioners, embracing epistemic reciprocalism, would treat religious fictionalists in the way religious fictionalists treat religious practitioners. Suppose, for example, that religious fictionalists say, "Religious sentences are false." Religious practitioners would in turn assert that religious fictionalists do not believe this sentence, but rather merely accept it, and that since religious fictionalists do not believe it, religious practitioners would not believe it either. As a result, religious fictionalists would fail to propagate religious fictionalism to religious practitioners.

Religious fictionalists might argue that they believe, rather than merely accept, the sentence "Religious sentences are false," and thus religious practitioners are wrong to say that religious fictionalists merely accept it. Religious practitioners, however, would reply that it is a double standard for religious fictionalists to believe it while asserting that religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences. They would add that since religious fictionalists believe their own sentences, they should expect that their target agents also believe their own sentences, other things being equal. In short, religious practitioners would say that religious fictionalists should apply the same standard to themselves as to their target agents.

Religious fictionalists might argue that religious practitioners *should* interpret them as believing the sentence, "Religious sentences are false." Religious practitioners, however, would retort that if religious fictionalists want religious practitioners to interpret them as believing their sentences, religious fictionalists should also interpret religious practitioners as believing their sentences. It is a double standard for religious fictionalists to interpret religious practitioners as accepting their sentences, but to expect that religious practitioners would interpret them as believing their sentences.

Religious fictionalists would defend their fictionalist attitude toward religious practitioners as follows. They just wish to avoid attributing false beliefs to religious practitioners, so they assert that religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences. However, religious practitioners would similarly defend their fictionalist attitude toward religious fictionalists. They would argue that they also just wish to avoid ascribing false

beliefs to religious fictionalists, so they assert that religious fictionalists merely accept the sentence "Religious sentences are false."

This confrontation between religious fictionalists and practitioners shows that if it is legitimate for religious fictionalists to take the fictionalist attitude toward religious practitioners' language, it is also legitimate for religious practitioners to take the fictionalist attitude toward religious fictionalists' language. In addition, the dialectic between them reminds us that "There is no reason for thinking that the Golden Rule ranges over moral matters, but not over epistemic matters" (Park, 2018b: 77–78). If religious fictionalists do not want their target agents to take the fictionalist attitude toward them, they should not take the fictionalist attitude toward their target agents. The dialectic also reminds us of the epistemic principle called "the epistemic imperative." It says, "*Act only on an epistemic maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal one*" (Park, 2018c: 441). Consider the maxim "Take the fictionalist attitude toward your target agents." If religious fictionalists do not will it to become a universal maxim, they should not act on it themselves.

4. Religious Practicalism

The five disadvantages of religious fictionalism that I sketched in Section 3 motivate an alternative account of religious discourse that I call "religious practicalism." I explicate it in this section. Religious practitioners would find it more agreeable than religious fictionalism.

As mentioned in Section 1, religious practicalism is composed of the following three theses: (i) We do not know whether religious sentences are true or false. (ii) Religious practitioners believe religious sentences. For example, when religious practitioners say, "God loves us," they believe that God loves us. (iii) Religious practitioners can justifiably carry on speaking religious sentences for practical benefits. The combination of these three theses is named as "religious practicalism" because it enshrines the idea that religious practitioners are practical agents pursuing happiness.

There are two similarities between religious fictionalism and practicalism. First, both assert that religious practitioners can justifiably carry on speaking religious sentences for practical purposes. Second, neither attributes false religious beliefs to religious practitioners. They do not, however, for different reasons. Religious fictionalism does not do so on the grounds that we should not attribute false beliefs to religious practitioners, other things being equal. Religious practicalism does not do so on the grounds that we do not know whether religious sentences are true or false.

There are two important differences between religious fictionalism and practicalism. First, religious fictionalism asserts that religious sentences are false, whereas religious practicalism asserts that we do not know whether they are true or false. Hence, religious fictionalism entails atheism, whereas religious practicalism entails skepticism. Second, religious fictionalism claims that religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences, whereas religious practicalism claims that religious practitioners believe religious sentences. As a result, religious practicalism fares better than religious fictionalism with respect to the five criticisms that I raised against religious fictionalism in Section 3.

Let me summarize the five advantages of religious practicalism over religious fictionalism: (i) Religious practicalism leaves the possibility open that believers will go to heaven, whereas religious fictionalism leaves this possibility closed. For this reason, Pascalians would choose religious practicalism over religious fictionalism. (ii) Religious practicalism asserts that religious practitioners believe religious sentences, and thus religious practicalists are not in the dilemma that religious fictionalists are in. (See Subsection 3.2 for the dilemma.) (iii) According to religious practicalism, religious practitioners believe

religious sentences. Consequently, religious practicalism does not attribute the four problems to religious practitioners. (See Subsection 3.3 for the four problems.) (iv) Religious practicalism does not imply that philosophers of religion have better epistemic access to religious practitioners' mental states than the practitioners themselves. (v) Religious practicalists comply with the epistemic imperative. Consider the maxim "Interpret your target agents as believing their sentences." Religious practicalists act on it, and they will it to become a universal maxim.

5. Objections and Replies

5.1. Dogmatic

Opponents might argue that religious practicalism paints religious practitioners as being dogmatic. The first thesis of religious practicalism states that we do not know whether religious sentences are true or false. The second thesis states, however, that religious practitioners believe religious sentences. In general, if we do not know whether a sentence is true or false, we should not believe it, and we should instead withhold our judgment. Thus, religious practicalism implies that religious practitioners adhere to religious beliefs despite the lack of sufficient evidence for them.

We, however, hold certain beliefs despite the lack of sufficient evidence for them all the time. For example, we tend to believe that we are smarter, look better, and drive better than average. We tend to overestimate the qualities of ourselves, i.e., we are under what psychologists call "illusory superiority." Patricia Cross (1977) discovered an example of illusory superiority that might be a rude awakening to many readers of this paper, viz., professors tend to believe that their teaching abilities are above average. Many of their beliefs are false, but they hold them, and it is not irrational to hold them. After all, it is difficult to falsify them. If a professor provides evidence to show that another professor's teaching ability is below average, the latter will certainly adduce counterevidence and/or take issue with the standard of the evaluation. As a result, the former will never be able to falsify the latter's belief. Moreover, professors' beliefs about their teaching abilities are useful in that they protect their self-esteem and help maintain their mental health. The same holds for religious beliefs. It is difficult to falsify them, and they are useful to religious practitioners. For these two reasons, religious practitioners will continue to hold them. Religious practicalism asserts that it is justifiable for them to do so.

When professors say, "I teach better than average," psychologists would say that we do not know whether professors' sentence is true or false, and that professors believe it. Psychologists would not say that professors' sentence is false, and that professors merely accept it. Like psychologists, philosophers of religion should say that we do not know whether religious practitioners' sentences are true or false, and that religious practitioners believe their sentences. Philosophers of religion should not say that religious practitioners' sentences are false, and that religious practitioners merely accept their sentences.

Critics might object that there is a relevant difference between professors' sentence and religious practitioner's sentences, viz., there is no proof that professors' sentence is false, but there is proof, viz., the problem of evil,[2] that religious practitioners' sentences are false. Therefore, psychologists can say that we do not know whether professors' sentence is true or false, but philosophers of religion cannot say that we do not know whether religious practitioners' sentences are true or false, i.e., they can only say that they are false.

[2] In addition to the problem of evil, there are the problems of divine location and age. They hold, respectively, that it is not clear where God existed before he created the universe and how old he was when he created the universe (Park, 2017b).

Religious practicalists admit that the problem of evil constitutes some reason for disbelieving that God exists, but they insist that it is not powerful enough to persuade believers that God does not exist. In general, the higher the stakes are, the more powerful an argument should be to disprove a belief. The stakes are extremely high when it comes to belief in God, given that religious practitioners might or might not go to heaven, depending on whether they have it or not. Thus, an extremely powerful argument is required to persuade believers that their belief is false. The problem of evil does not amount to such an argument.

5.2. Potential Modification

Religious fictionalists might modify their position. The old position holds that religious sentences are false, that religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences, and that they can justifiably behave as if religious sentences are true. The new position holds that we do not know whether religious sentences are true or false, that religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences, and that they can justifiably behave as if religious sentences are true. Note that the new position claims, like religious practicalism, that we do not know whether religious sentences are true. From the Pascalians' perspective, the new position seems to be advantageous over the old position in that it leaves the possibility open, while the latter leaves it closed, that they go to heaven.

On a closer examination, however, the new position also implies that religious practitioners do not have the chance to go to heaven. Like the old position, the new position claims that religious practitioners do not believe, but rather merely accept, religious sentences. According to Pascal's Wager, what will take us to heaven is "belief in God, not mere pretence belief" (Olson, 2014: 192). In other words, we should not only behave as if God exists but also believe in God to go to heaven.

Moreover, there is a terminological issue with the new position, viz., it does not deserve the appellation 'religious fictionalism.' After all, it does not claim that religious discourse is a fiction. It rather claims that we do not know whether it is a fiction. Why would such a position be called "religious fictionalism"? As mentioned in Section 1, mathematical fictionalism and moral fictionalism assert, respectively, that mathematical discourse and moral discourse are fictions, so that mathematical and moral sentences are false. They do not assert that we do not know whether or not mathematical and moral discourses are fictions.

6. Conclusion

Religious fictionalism asserts that religious sentences are false, and that religious practitioners merely accept religious sentences. By contrast, religious practicalism asserts that we do not know whether religious sentences are true or false, but that religious practitioners believe religious sentences. Both religious fictionalism and practicalism assert that religious practitioners can justifiably carry on using religious sentences for practical purposes. Overall, religious practicalism has intellectual, moral, and practical advantages over religious fictionalism. Let me summarize this paper with a motto: "Religious practitioners are practical agents."

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