

Buddhist Fictionalism: A Response to Tensions in Buddhism

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Buddhism has always denied the existence of an ultimate self while still endorsing practices and beliefs that involve the self. This apparent inconsistency can be resolved by a fictionalist view of self. I will also argue that a fictionalist view of the self-identity predicate can resolve problems inherent to Zen Buddhism. Subsequently, I will demonstrate how fictionalism is a more favorable reading of Buddhist practices than reductionism, which has also been proposed as a means to resolve Buddhist views of the self. Therefore, this paper also proposes that a Fictionalist view of the self provides the most consistent and convincing account of Buddhist doctrines.

There is a tension within Buddhist thought and traditions. On one hand, Buddhism holds that there is no ultimate, integral self, or “anatman” in Hindi (Harvey 2013). On the other hand, Buddhist traditions make frequent references to the self and even seem committed to its existence, as some of its strongest tenets involve the cycle of reincarnation and the importance of compassion towards other beings. If there is no self, then what continues the cycle of reincarnation from one life to the next? And why, then, should we ascribe to moral beliefs about how the self should act? The tension between denying the existence of the self and endorsing views that entail the existence of the self thus concerns the core beliefs of Buddhism.

How can Buddhism retain its discourse about the self while still denying the latter’s existence? I propose that this tension can be resolved with a fictionalist view of the self. While fictionalism has been explored as a response to Buddhism, this has mainly been in reference to Mahayana Buddhism, mainly done by Garfield, Sauchelli, and D’amato. Little work has been done to investigate how fictionalism can be applied to Theravada positions, such as Zen Buddhism. Zen traditions are profoundly unique and incomparable to any other area of Buddhism. This is shown particularly through the Zen perception of self-identity, which seems contradictory and even paradoxical. The Zen use of the self-identity particle, in particular, is exceptionally confusing. Thus, exploring a fictionalist reading of Buddhism not only sheds light on an unexamined aspect of Buddhism, it helps resolve some of the tensions inherent to readings of Zen. While I am not the first to propose a broadly fictionalist reading of Buddhist tenets, to my knowledge I am the first to work out the details of such a reading and to show that it may be applied to positions in the Zen tradition of Buddhism.

In an effort to ameliorate the above-mentioned tension, others have proposed a reductionism about the self, such as Eklund, Garfield, and Siterits. Reductionism aims to ground talk about the self in a more fundamental discourse. I shall argue, however, that fictionalism provides a more plausible resolution of this tension. Part of fictionalism’s growing appeal among contemporary metaphysicians is that it legitimizes claims about non-existent entities without multiplying the meanings of “existence” or “truth,” as reductionism seems to. Fictionalism about the self enjoys these benefits as well.

There are a few caveats to my proposal. First of all, I will not attempt to defend fictionalism or reductionism in their own right (this has been explored to a greater and more competent degree by other scholars). My goal is not to discuss the independent plausibility of these theories but rather to show that they provide a view of the self that coheres with Zen Buddhist beliefs. Additionally, I am not claiming that the interpretation of Zen texts in regards to Buddhism follows their authors’ original intent. Instead, I am choosing to focus on interpretations that support a coherent Buddhist theory of self.

I will begin by providing an overview of fictionalism and its application to self-talk. I shall then use this view to interpret Zen discussions of the self and how Zen interprets the identity predicate. Afterwards, I will introduce some consequences of a fictionalist view of self and defend it against a natural objection. Finally, I will compare the fictionalist interpretation of Buddhism to other, competing accounts, such as reductionism, and will suggest reasons for preferring it to its competitors.

Fictionalism and Buddhism

Fictionalism has been discussed at length by scholars such as Frederick Kroon, Mark Kalderon, Stephen Yablo, James Woodbridge, and many others.

I will briefly give an account of the landscape as it stands. Yablo (2000-2002), Harty Field (1980, 1989), and Mark Balaguer (1998) have advocated for mathematical fictionalism, and Bas van Fraassen (1980) has outlined a version of fictionalism about scientific theories. Kalderon (2005), among others such as Daniel Nolan and Caroline West (2005) have defended a version of moral fictionalism. Kroon (2000) has described an interesting version of fictionalism in regards to dialetheism, negative existentials, and identity statements. Even metaphysicians such as David Lewis (2005) and Peter Van Inwagen (1990) have contributed to the literature regarding fictionalism.¹

Despite their differences, fictionalists are typically characterized by the following claims. First, fictionalists about some target vocabulary, *L*, insist the semantics for *L* are of the ordinary, truth-conditional (or perhaps, possible-worlds) variety. In other words, the meaning of declarative sentences in *L* ought to be identified with the conditions under which they are true. Likewise, predicates in *L* are treated as expressing functions from objects to truth-values, and, most importantly, singular terms and predicates in *L* are taken to refer to objects and properties, respectively. This semantic literalism contrasts with views, such as expressivism, which hold that sentences in the target vocabulary are not, despite appearances, in the business of stating facts and that their meaning is to be construed in terms other than those of truth-conditions, e.g. the attitudes that speakers typically express when uttering them.

The second characteristic that binds fictionalists of different stripes together is their insistence that the objects (purportedly) referred to by singular terms in the target vocabulary *do not exist*, and hence, strictly speaking, all sentences formed with these terms are *false*. By itself, this claim would lead to a kind of error-theory regarding such vocabulary, but fictionalists typically follow the denial of a vocabulary's reference with the claim that "acceptance in a given domain of inquiry need not be truth normed, and that the acceptance of a sentence from the...region of discourse need not involve belief in its content" (Kalderon). In other words, just because, strictly speaking, the sentences formed with the target vocabulary are false, this need not entail that *using* those sentences is worthless or harmful to our epistemic goals.

So, as a third characteristic, fictionalists share the view that when speakers typically *use* singular terms that belong to the target vocabulary, they are not or should not be treated as expressing *beliefs* in the existence of their referents. Rather, speakers are or should be seen as partaking in an elaborate game of make-believe or pretend, often unknowingly treating the objects of discourse as fictional. For example, on a literal interpretation, the sentence "Sherlock Holmes lives on 221 B Baker street" is false, but when uttered it is typically understood the speaker does not actually believe that there is a Sherlock Holmes who lives on Baker street. If she is making an assertion, then the statement is true in the context of a story. Thus, fictionalism highlights the ability of agents to engage in an area of discourse without committing themselves to the existence of the subject of the discourse (D'Amato 411).

To summarize: fictionalism treats certain areas of discourse as fictional. These areas are often important to preserve because they promote our goals, epistemic or otherwise, or because they possess some intrinsic value, but we should not be misled into thinking they deserve a nonliteral interpretation or that their putative referents exist. Fictionalists see our activity in these areas of discourse as a game of make-believe, such that we are able to make quasi-commitments in the area of discourse (and retain our truth-conditional semantics) without actually making commitments to their referents' existence.

There are many ways to redeem the core insight of fictionalism and at least two ways to construe the fictional nature of claims: preface fictionalism and prefix fictionalism. In preface fictionalism, utterances that make use of the target vocabulary lack the illocutionary force associated with assertions; rather they are pretend-assertions or quasi-assertions. Consequently, such utterances do not express beliefs but instead express states of make-believe or pretense. In prefix fictionalism, the speaker asserts a claim, but the content asserted is prefixed with a marker that 'fictionalizes' that content. The prefix fictionalist would claim that we can assert the phrase "Sherlock Holmes lives on 221 B Baker street," but only if we construe it as a part of a claim whose full content is specified by adding "In the novels by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle..." to the beginning of the sentence. Thus, according to prefix fictionalism, we do express beliefs when we use the target vocabulary, but the content of those beliefs is strictly circum-

1. For a comprehensive and wide-reaching account of what fictionalism contains, see *Fictionalism in Metaphysics* (2005), edited by Kalderon.

scribed within “the story” and therefore those beliefs are not about the (actual) existence of objects.

Fictionalism can also be defined by its different aims. Revolutionary Fictionalism involves a reconstruction of discourse: it is prescriptive rather than descriptive. According to it, the legitimacy of a vocabulary or area of discourse depends upon our treating it as fictional. That is, the point of engaging in a certain field of discourse is best achieved when we treat it as fictional, and so we *ought* only to make pretend assertions when using the vocabulary (Eklund, 2017). In contrast, according to Hermeneutic Fictionalism, which is the theory I will use to construct my case for Buddhist Fictionalism, the actual nature of the field of discourse is fictional. It is impossible then to make assertions about a fictional field of discourse, and any discourse about the field only pretends to aim at truth.

I have tried to give a brief summary of fictionalism and its different aims. Now I shift my attention to a particular field of fictionalism: Buddhist fictionalism. This topic has also been explored by Andrea Sauchelli (2006), as a response to Mark Siderits’s Buddhist reductionism (1997). Jay Garfield has also advocated for Buddhist fictionalism as a response to Siderits’s reductionism (2006). I believe it appropriate to say that Buddhist reductionism has long been seen as an attractive characterization of Buddhist philosophy, however there is growing interest in Buddhist fictionalism as a different, possibly better, approach. Here, I will outline the main groundwork for Buddhist fictionalism, and later, will compare it to Siderits’s Buddhist reductionism.

As mentioned in the introduction, there is a tension within Buddhism—Buddhism wants to consistently state that everything is emptiness, there is no intrinsic self, and holding on to the concept of these things just prevents enlightenment. However, Buddhism also frequently makes reference to the world, the self, and how we should act within in. Adopting a fictionalist framework towards Buddhism would allow us to treat these problematic areas of discourse as fictional. Therefore, we can discuss concepts such as the world and the self within Buddhism, without committing ourselves to the belief that these things exist. The upside of adopting a fictionalist view towards Buddhist concepts is obvious.

Adopting Buddhist fictionalism is also supported by Buddhism’s distinction between conventional and ultimate truths. Conventionally true statements are those that align with common sense and are in agree-

ment with accepted linguistic and epistemic practices. Ultimate truths, however, are different. Mark Siderits describes them as a statement that is true if “it corresponds to the facts and neither asserts nor presupposes that conceptual fictions exist,” conceptual fictions meaning “whatever is thought to exist only because of our use of a convenient designation” (Siderits 464). Many statements, then, are conventionally true but ultimately false. Why then, should we endorse an ultimately false but conventionally true belief? Siderits’ answer is that while some conventionally true objects do not exist, it is possible to replace our talk of them with that of entities that do exist, i.e. those that are ultimately true. For example, one can replace the term “covalent bond” with “number of pairs of electrons a given atom shares with its neighbors” (Langmuir 868-934). It is then possible for many conventionally true statements to receive a “full translation” into ultimately true statements (Siderits 464). However, it is more convenient to refer to those objects by their conventionally true terms. In regard to Buddhist fictionalism, a conventional truth would be that there is an external world, populated with real objects and real properties, whereas an ultimate truth would be that all existence is emptiness. The conventional truth is the fictional one, that we keep only for means of convenience. The ultimate truth is the real one, which is understood to be the way things “really” are.

However, there is a powerful objection against this Buddhist “global fictionalism” by Laura P. Guerrero. Guerrero characterizes Buddhist “global fictionalism,” as an “aim(s) to extend [fictionalism] by proposing that all language be analyzed in an analogous way” (Guerrero 5). In other words, global fictionalism is the view that all languages within a certain field of discourse be analyzed as fictional. However, the issue with this construction of fictionalism is that it “exchanges the assertion of one statement with another, it relies on the non-fictional literal assertability of the prefixed statement” (Guerrero 5). In other words, fictional discourse is always grounded in a prefix that establishes it as fictional. Yet what happens when this sort of discourse is applied to a global context? Guerrero explains, “If we try to make such an account global, then the prefixed statements that are supposed to serve as the actual, though often implicit, tent of fictional claims must also be understood as fictional and this leads to a problematic repress that makes fictional discourse impossible” (Guerrero 5). What follows is that “no content or context of

assessment is ever fixed for the fictional claims and thus no claim can be asserted or assessed for truth because the iterative process never ends” (Guerrero 5).

Yet I believe that a version of Buddhist fictionalism solely about the self avoids this objection, as fictionalism about the self is fixed in a universal truth context. Put simply, Buddhist self-fictionalism is the view that while discourse about the self may be useful, ultimately there is no intrinsic self (*anatman*). This is not a completely novel idea. Andrea Sauchelli has begun to explore this idea in his paper “Buddhist Reductionism, Fictionalism about the Self, and Buddhist Fictionalism” (2016). This version of Buddhist fictionalism holds that all self-talk except negation of the intrinsic self should be treated as a complex game of “make-believe.” This method is consistent with Buddhist practices, as mentioned above. It is useful to speak and act as if the self is a distinct entity, as it might help one embody Buddhist beliefs, even though Buddhism denies that the self is real. Madhyamaka Buddhism in particular is known for allowing its followers to ascribe to somewhat incorrect beliefs for the purpose of helping its followers reach enlightenment (thus the distinction between conventional and ultimate truths becomes even more necessary). Adopting this fictionalist stance allows us to take our utterances about the self as part of a *fictional discourse*; statements about the self have the same force as the sentence “Sherlock Holmes lives on 221B Baker Street” typically does. We are able to make “pretend” assertions about the self, and therefore we neither commit to a belief about the self nor muddy it with a misleading or inaccurate description of self.

I have outlined thus far the main concepts of fictionalism, its different aims, and its relation to Buddhism. I will now try to explain the main benefits of adopting a Buddhist fictionalist view of the self and why, in my opinion, a Buddhist fictionalist view of self might be the only way to redeem Buddhism’s talk about the self.

The Self and Fictionalism within Zen Buddhism

Theories of Buddhist Fictionalism have already been examined by Kroon, D’amato, and Sauchelli, to name a few. But discussion about Fictionalism in regard to Zen Buddhism has been absent. Indeed, Zen contains some of the greatest contradictions between self and no-self. These contradictions are described and explored by Dogen, Suzuki, and Nishida, to name a few, and are evident within Buddhist texts. For example, in the Sabbasava Sutra, a Buddhist

text which explores what a Buddhist monk should and shouldn’t believe, two of the six “defilements” that lead Buddhists astray are “I have a self” and “I have no self.” Clearly these two statements are contradictory and seemingly illogical. However, in Zen Buddhism, these kinds of statements are typical.

It is in the face of these contradictory statements about the self that I propose that we take a fictionalist account of the self-identity predicate. I will show that when Buddhists use the self-identity predicate, it fails to mark out a genuine property in the world. Then, I propose that it follows that the same analysis of the self-identity *predicate* can apply towards the ontological *self*. However, this topic is best explored in a later paper, and for now I will only focus on the use of the self-identity predicate.

First, we must establish that the Zen Buddhist’s use of the self-identity predicate is incoherent and self-contradictory. This is visible through many Zen koans and texts. The issue then lies in what the Buddhist is referring to when they use the term “the self.” In some cases it seems to be a concrete, individual property, like in famous koans such as the Muddy Road, or in cases where Zen masters ascribe some sort of rules for how one should act (like in the koan “My Heart Burns Like Fire”).² Use of the first and second person pronoun seems to indicate a use of the self-identity predicate. Yet other Zen discourses claim that trying to define a “self” is impossible and misleading. Nishida writes that “every being is being, and every being is non being.” Even the Buddha himself is reported to have said that thinking that there either is or is not a self “falls into extreme form of the wrong view that makes the path of Buddhist practice impossible.” William Edelglass and Jay Garfield note in *Buddhist Philosophy* that to Zen Buddhists, “The source of much of our suffering is this false sense of self, a sense that we exist as an enduring, substantially existent being, instead of as a conventionally aggregated stream of psychophysical processes” (Edelglass and Garfield 261). The confusion regarding the use of the self-identity predicate is especially obvious in works of the Kyoto school, who take inspiration from Zen Buddhism. Concepts such as the Logic of Soku, which refers to the self in statements such as “A is A. A is not A. Therefore, A is A,” only serve to further confound the use of the self-identity predicate.

When Buddhists use the self-identity predicate

2. For these koans and others, see a translation of the Shaseki-Shu (Collection of Stone and Sand).

then, they seem to be referring neither to the existence nor non-existence of the self but to something else entirely. However, it is unclear what the self-identity predicate refers to in these situations. Use of first- and second-person pronouns are contrasted with discourse which claims that there is no self. In Buddhist statements and claims, the self-identity predicate fails to mark out a genuine property, as its applications seem at best semantically confusing. Then, as Kroon argues similarly, in the case of the truth predicate “that (failing to mark out a genuine property) is enough to warrant the conclusion that [‘self’] doesn’t fulfil its expected semantic function of determining a property” (Kroon 256). Discourse involving the self-identity predicate will fail to characterize reality, not because the self-identity predicate is not applied, but because “the conditions are incoherent” (Kroon 256).

However, just because the self-identity predicate does not fulfil its expected semantic use does not make it useless. Even if a word fails to fulfill its function, we can *make believe* that they do (Walton 1990). Furthermore, we can have “interesting, pointful discourse involving [words that do not fulfill their semantic function] despite the fact that these words are not able to play the semantic role we would expect them to play when used in standard assertoric discourse” (Kroon 257). And it is true that the self-identity predicate is useful to Buddhists. For how else are Buddhists supposed to make moral ascriptions to individuals if they cannot use the self-identity predicate? In fact, it is documented in Buddhism that monks will sometimes allow people to function under false beliefs if it will lead one to enlightenment. This is most famously shown in a section of the Lotus Sutra, where a father leads his children from a burning house with the promise of presents. This tale serves as a metaphor for the Buddha leading laypeople to enlightenment with false promises. These false promises are permitted, as it saves the lay people from a worse fate (being stuck in the cycle of reincarnation), represented by the fire. Therefore, not only is keeping the self-identity predicate helpful for Buddhists, they are explicitly encouraged to sometimes operate under false pretenses.

Zen Buddhists then, “may want to be fictionalist(s) about theories [like the self-identity predicate] that purport to describe the world but in terms we find deeply erroneous yet profoundly useful” (Kroon 257). Kroon notes that fictionalism about possible worlds and morality belongs in the aforementioned category and proposes that “true” should be included along-

side these terms. I propose that to the Zen Buddhist the self-identity predicate belongs in this category. As the self-identity predicate is applied inconsistently, it cannot fulfil its expected semantic function. However, it would be useful to act as if there were a property for the self-identity predicate to pick out (Kroon 257). Following, we should be anti-realists about the use of the self-identity predicate within Zen Buddhism, and more specifically, we should be fictionalists about the self-identity predicate. A Buddhist can take what they say to be subject to a negating preface that we are pretending that the self-identity predicate stands for a property—but there really is no such property. Therefore, we then have a way of expressing self-identity, without the internal inconsistencies that self-identity normally carries within Zen Buddhism.

Now that we have established that the self-identity predicate is best treated within Zen Buddhism as fictional, one could make the argument that the *self* should be treated as fictional. A parallel problem seems to arise with whether or not we should grant ontological status to the self within Zen Buddhism, and the contradictory discourse surrounding it. However, I believe this topic is too lengthy to tackle here and is best addressed in another paper. For now, I will turn to a competing theory and establish why it is not as attractive an option as fictionalism.

Reductionism

Buddhist reductionism, as described by Mark Siderits, is a position about what belongs in our ontology. To be a reductionist about kinds of things “K” is not to deny that Ks exist “in a sense,” but to believe that K’s existence is substantiated only through the existence of other things. Hence, Ks can be *reduced* to more fundamental entities. Siderits offers a “complete description” test of reductionist theses; if we can give a complete description of K without ever mentioning K or asserting that K exists, then K is reducible (Siderits 455). When applied within Buddhist contexts, reductionism becomes a view about the self. Buddhist reductionism holds that the self can be reduced to what is described in Buddhism as the five skandhas, which make up a person’s mental and physical existence. Siderits affirms that, according to the Buddhist, our belief in the self derives from our discourse about the self, but that the self can be completely described in terms of the five skandhas (Siderits 463). Thus, given that we can give a complete description of the self without referring to something other than the

five skandhas, there is no ontologically distinct self.

The theory of Buddhist reductionism is perhaps best understood in contrast to two other theories. The first theory is aptly named non-reductionism, which claims that Ks are a fundamental part of our ontology. Non-reductionism asserts that there is an ontologically distinct self. This obviously contradicts with the Buddhist doctrine of no-self. Even if scholars debate what exactly Buddhists mean by “self,” there is consensus that Buddhism denies it an irreducible ontological status (Harvey 2013).

The second theory, called eliminativism, is a little more complex. Eliminativism about K proposes that Ks do not belong in our ontology in any form. At first this seems somewhat similar to reductionism; they both believe that Ks are not a fundamental part of our ontology. Yet the difference between the eliminativist and the reductionist is a semantic one (Siderits 456). Eliminativists would remove talk of Ks from our discourse all together. Translating this into a Buddhist interpretation, then, eliminativism then would propose that “self,” if not a part of our ontology, should be removed from our discourse (Siderits 456). However, this does not properly characterize Buddhism. Talk about the self is evident in Buddhism, and it is required to understand concepts such as the cycle of Samsara (a fundamental part of Buddhism). Thus, an eliminativist view of the self is incompatible with Buddhist beliefs.

Siderits believes that reductionism accurately describes the Buddhist attitude towards the self because it neither claims that there is an ontologically distinct self nor that we should remove the term “self” from descriptions of our world. Buddhist reductionism recognizes that having the term “self” is useful for the purposes that Buddhism wishes to accomplish, such as proffering moral guidance. Buddhist reductionism is also supported by Buddhism’s distinction between conventional and ultimate truths. In Buddhist reductionism, the conventional truth would be that the self exists, whereas the ultimate truth would be that only the five skandhas exist. Since it is useful for the Buddhist to be able to refer to the self, the Buddhist retains her talk of it.

The distinction between conventional and ultimate truths justifies the Buddhist reductionist’s claims about the self, such as “You should have a compassionate self.” How can that be if the self does not exist? Reductionism tells us that these statements about the self are true “in a sense.” If we

take ‘in a sense’ to mean something that is conventionally true, then it seems like the Buddhist may legitimately make assertions about the self. However, the reductionist’s analysis implies that the truth properties for conventional and ultimate sentences are different. If the reductionist wants to be able to make assertions about the self, they are committed to asserting something that is conventionally true but ultimately false. What follows then is that “true” has two different meanings, and Buddhist reductionism thus endorses a form of alethic pluralism.

Put simply, alethic pluralism is the belief that there is more than one truth property. The pluralist claims that propositions are true on account of instantiating different qualities. Pluralism *can* explain the potential disagreement between conventional and ultimate truths; however, pluralism comes at a cost.

The first price to be paid is that we must determine how we are to distinguish conventionalist propositions from ultimate propositions and vice versa. If we do not know if a person is making a conventional or ultimate claim, and if these claims have different kinds of truth values, we cannot determine if the proposition is true or not. However, Siderits provides no account of how we normally distinguish between these two types of assertions. A second issue regards the handling of the content of “mixed” sentences, “which contain content from different areas of discourse” (Pedersen & Wright, 2016). A mixed sentence in the case of Buddhist reductionism would contain both conventional and ultimate discourse, such as “The self consists of the five skandhas.” Determining the value of these mixed sentences is then difficult—by which standards are we to evaluate them? Another version of the issue with mixed sentences comes from compounded sentences. Consider the sentence “the self is real and it is not real”—the very sort of statement that is common in Zen Buddhism. If we evaluate that sentence just from a conventional or ultimate account of truth, the sentence is false. But the sentence seems to be expressing two different truths at the same time: “the self is real” (conventionally true) and “the self is not real” (ultimately true). What then is the truth value of the compound sentence? Pluralism has no easy answer to this question or the other host of objections to the theory.

Yet maybe the reductionist is not reduced to Pluralism and can avoid the issue altogether. She might answer that we misunderstand the way that the reductionist speaks about the self. If talk about the self

is grounded in more fundamental discourse, then we may be correct in saying that there is no “self,” but sentences where we use the term “self” as a substitute for the five skandhas are still true. However, why is the reductionist endorsing inaccurate self-talk over accurate self-talk? More troubling, why is it useful to use less descriptive and inaccurate language? Why would we want to use a term that does not reflect reality? Nearly all ontological systems aim for clarity in their ontology and discourse, however Buddhist reductionism is advocating for the opposite. The reductionist must then answer why they should advocate for an ontology that is less accurate, when in all other areas of discourse accuracy is praised. The reductionist might answer that the term “self” is not actually a part of our ontology at all, but is a mere “conceptual fiction,” as described by Siderits.

I have tried to make it clear, then, that fictionalism fits a Buddhist view of the self far more than reductionism does. Reductionism does not make an accurate account of the Buddhists’ use of conventional and ultimate truths. Reductionism also falls into issues of alethic pluralism with their account of truth, of which fictionalism does not fall prey to.

In this paper, I have enumerated the reasons why fictionalism is a compelling option for a resolution of Buddhist tensions. I have also detailed why fictionalism is especially useful in resolving issues concerning the self-identity predicate in Zen Buddhism. Finally, I outline why fictionalism is a more attractive option than reductionism for explaining these tensions within Buddhism. In conclusion, Buddhist Fictionalism gives a comprehensive philosophy for the Buddhist understanding of self and the self-identity predicate and relieves the tension within Buddhism.♦

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