I Don't Trust Myself

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Abstract.

This paper presents a paradox arising from the statement "I don't trust myself". It demonstrates how this seemingly simple sentence leads to a situation where it contradictorily refers back to itself. Following the deduction of the initial paradox, the paper concludes by generalizing the underlying concept into a broader paradox of the same kind.

1. Introduction

"I don't trust myself"

Indeed, an unexpected paradox is to be revealed from a seemingly simple sentence: "I don't trust myself". This sentence is paradoxical because if I don't trust myself, then I cannot trust any of my own statements. This means that the statement "I don't trust myself" is also not trustworthy, as it comes from the very self that I don't trust. This implies, paradoxically, that to trust the statement "I don't trust myself", I must first need to trust myself! However, If I trust myself, then I must also trust the initial statement that "I don't trust myself". If I then again trust that "I don't trust myself", I get looped back to where I started. This creates an endless loop of logical contradictions where I simultaneously trust and do not trust myself. So, the question remains:

Is the sentence "I don't trust myself" really trustable?

The following passage presents the paradox's argument followed by its deduction, which is made using natural language and symbols where appropriate.

Argument. The statement "I don't trust myself" yields a paradox.

Deduction. Let

$$\mathbf{P}(I) : \text{I trust myself}$$
$$\sim \mathbf{P}(I) : \text{I don't trust myself}$$

be statements. If the statement $\sim \mathbf{P}(I)$ is considered, then:

1. $\sim \mathbf{P}(I)$.
2. If $\sim \mathbf{P}(I)$, then I must also not trust the statement $\sim \mathbf{P}(I)$.

3. If I don't trust the statement $\sim \mathbf{P}(I)$, then I must trust $\mathbf{P}(I)$.
4. If I trust $\mathbf{P}(I)$, then I must trust Step 1.

This creates a self-referential loop of deduction, suggesting that I simultaneously trust and not trust myself. Hence, the statement $\sim \mathbf{P}(I)$ leads to a paradox. ■

With the initial paradox being presented, the following section generalizes it for any suitable synonyms.

2. Generalized Paradox

Argument. The statement "x does not believe in x" yields a paradox.

Deduction. Let

$$\mathbf{P}(x) : x \text{ believes in } x$$
$$\sim \mathbf{P}(x) : x \text{ doesn't believe in } x$$

be statements. If x considers the statement $\sim \mathbf{P}(x)$, then:

1. x believes $\sim \mathbf{P}(x)$.
2. This implies that x cannot believe anything that x believes.
3. Therefore, x must not believe the statement $\sim \mathbf{P}(x)$ also.
4. If x does not believe the statement $\sim \mathbf{P}(x)$, then x must believe $\mathbf{P}(x)$.
5. This implies that x can believe anything that x chooses to believe.
6. Therefore, Step 1.

This creates a self-referential loop of deduction, suggesting x simultaneously believe and not believe in x. Hence, the statement $\sim \mathbf{P}(x)$ leads to a paradox. ■