

Liar's Paradox

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When we call a statement true or false, we are saying that we have compared that statement to a given fact or principle and either found corroboration or contradiction. For example, if we say "All apples are cubes that glow in the dark," we can only judge that statement as being true or false by comparing the statement to what we know about apples.

In the Liar's Paradox, we say "This very statement is false." The alleged paradox is that if the statement is true, then it is false as it claims, but if it is false as it claims, then it has stated the truth and cannot be false, ad infinitum. Properly understood, however, there is no paradox.

To judge the truth or falsity of "This very statement is false," we must compare the statement not only to itself as explicitly required, but also to what we know about finding the falsity of any general statement. This is implied by the use of the term "false," much like the term "apple" would require us to compare a statement to what we know about apples. With the Liar's Paradox, the very fact of the supposed paradox proves that the statement cannot be definitively proven false. And as such, the statement is ultimately true because it admits that it falsely asserts that it is provably false.

Similarly, in the Truth Teller, we say "This very statement is true." Although there is no alleged paradox, the statement's self-reference to its own veracity is not sufficient evidence for its truth. The informal fallacy called *petitio principii*, or begging the question, occurs where a questioned fact is called in as proof of that fact, and such proofs are always illegitimate. However, we can go further here and say that the statement is definitely false because it falsely claimed that it was provably true.

Very Respectfully,
Ray Donald Pratt