

## Some Queries and Some Definitions

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### DOES ERROR EXIST?

We start by considering an extreme view: There is really *no such thing as error*, and the organizers of the conference were biased in assuming that there exists something that can be called “human error,” as if it were an observable object.

... we may observe the performance of an operator, classify it as being incorrect, and determine the cause to be a “Human Error”... It is, however, obvious that “human error” does not refer to something observable, in the same sense as decision making does. If we believe that so-called human error is a cause of behavior, not a consequence, it is still true that error must be inferred from observations rather than being observed directly. Error is but one way of describing a human performance and is the term used when no other explanation can be found for a system failure. Behavior still consists of perception, attention, memory, action, etc., all functioning as they usually do. It is only how we classify the *result* that defines the error. Therefore to study error is to study ordinary psychological processes.

This extreme attitude has implications for what could be called the “philosophy of error.” Although it is certainly thought provoking, it did not find much support among conferees.