

ON PERFECTION
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People are carefully conditioned throughout their private life to accept the fact that people are not perfect and will therefore make mistakes. By the time they seek an industrial life, this belief is firmly rooted. It becomes fashionable to say, "People are humans and humans make mistakes. Nothing can ever be perfect as long as people take part in it," and so it goes.

And, people do make mistakes. Particularly people who expect to make some each day and do not become upset when they happen. You might say they have accepted a standard that requires a few mistakes in order to be certified as a human.

The question must arise, then, as to whether people have a built-in defect ratio. Do they always make the same percentage of errors in each thing they do? Like cashing their paycheck, for instance. Can we assume that a man who errs in five percent of his industrial activities will be shortchanged on five percent of the checks he cashes each year? Will he forget to pay his income tax five percent of the time? Will he go home to the wrong house several times each month?

If these assumptions are wrong, then errors must be a function of the importance that a man places on specific things. He is more careful about one act than another. He has learned to accept the fact that it is all right to make mistakes in his work but not permissible to defraud the government. In short, he has developed a dual attitude. In some things he is willing to accept imperfection, in others the amount of defects must be zero.

Mistakes are caused by two factors: lack of knowledge and lack of attention. Knowledge can be measured and deficiencies corrected through tried and true means. Lack of attention must be corrected by the person himself, through an acute reappraisal of his moral values. Lack of attention is an attitude problem. The man who commits himself to watch each detail and carefully avoid error takes the giant step toward setting a goal of Zero Defects in all things.

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