

The Bug That Vanishes When You Look: The Heisenbug

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Sometimes you get a report that a program occasionally throws a strange error, and when you fire up the debugger to find the cause, the error vanishes as if by magic. You add just one line of output to check something and the problem stops; delete that line and it comes back. Developers have given these bugs that hide the moment you look at them a nickname borrowed from a physicist's name: the 'Heisenbug.' Put simply, a Heisenbug is a software bug that disappears or changes its behavior when you try to investigate its cause. The term alludes to the observer effect, the idea that the very act o