

Video Guide

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

50 minutes, bw, 1955

How do we perceive others? How do we make inferences about people from their behavior? How do we evaluate people? What are some of the errors we make in evaluating others?

Watch this film very **closely**. Do not take notes. The film starts with three illustrations which make the point that we can easily be misled (the old shell game - watch closely and see if you can follow the round object), the top hat illusion, and the ambiguous cube figure).

This film dramatizes the story of twelve consecutive hours in the life of Michael Gerard, an artist. **What kind of person is Michael Gerard? How would you describe him?**

We first see Michael in his studio, standing amid a disarray of spilled paints and a knife, and an apparently lifeless young woman lying on a couch. From here, the film flashes back to give the impressions Michael has made on five people with whom he has come in contact, as follows:

1. **Waiter** - How does he describe Michael?

The evening before, Michael was in a night club and the waiter testifies that Michael is a smooth lady's man. It develops that the waiter formed his judgment quickly - "When I served him his first drink I could tell he's a lady's man all right. " Having made his judgment, the waiter from there on sees and hears only those things which reinforces this opinion. When the commentator asks why he is so sure that Michael is a smooth operator, the waiter answers that he recognizes a smooth operator when he sees one because "I know how to get around myself. "

2. **Mother** - How does she describe Michael?

3. **Cabbie** - How does he describe Michael?

4. **Landlord** - How does he describe Michael?

This conversation is fascinating. During the conversation Michael says to Koppelmeyer, "The man you see in me does not exist. " What do you think Michael meant by that statement?

5 **Cleaning Lady** - She says Michael is a murderer.

Our five sources disagree in the ways they see Michael. What do you think of Michael? How can we account for the range of views about Michael?

Did Michael kill the model? What is your evidence? **Watch closely.**

Here are some general principles of perception which can be useful to you in your understanding of how other's view you and how you perceive others?

1. Each of us perceives based on our past experiences and attitudes. Can you think of an example?
2. Snap judgments are often incomplete and incorrect. Why?
3. We tend to see those things we want to see. Can you think of an example?
4. We really can't perceive anything completely objectively. We always filter our perceptions. Our perspective influences our perception.
5. Although a group may see the same behavior, their interpretations can vary.
6. We tend to make assumptions and jump to conclusions on insufficient information.
7. Often we confuse what is with what we think things should be.
8. Gathering information from several perspectives increases the likelihood of getting reliable information.
9. We often attribute to others some of our motives and faults.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES **WRITE** your answers below.

1. How would you describe Michael Gerard?
2. What did Michael mean when talking to Koppelmeyer: "The man you see in me does not exist"?
3. Describe evidence to support your view on the issue of the murder of the girl.
4. Select any four of the above principles and cite one example from the film for each.
5. Describe what you learned from the film (might do for a Unit Review).
6. What is the telephone number on the cab? The cab number?