Every generation produces those few individuals whose innate understanding of themselves and their society strikes at the heart of the human condition. They are the cognoscenti. Author and biographer John Robert Ciet met the foremost social philosopher and cognoscenti Eli Khamarov at a seaside resort in Ogunquit, Maine.

John Robert Ciet:

That's an interesting story. I was on sabbatical back in 1984 after just finishing three books that I was working on of an academic nature, and I was travelling through the Northeast, oftentimes stopping at small villages at small coffee houses that are frequented by the villagers. I rather enjoy those types of atmospheres. And I came across this gentleman who was speaking with a group of ... apparently locals, about various topics, social in nature primarily, some political about international as well as national politics, and I became quite intrigued by some of the comments that he made. Many of the comments I found to be quite insightful, others tended to infuriate my ... my sense of ... of ideology and my sense of what I felt as my comfort with our ... our political system in our nation. And so I, in a rather nonchalant manner, kind of injected myself into the conversation.

Narration:

That fateful encounter introduced the author to Eli Khamarov and his philosophy. Widely known and respected, Eli Khamarov is considered by many the leading social theorist.
and apologist. Contrary to his strong opinions, his gentle nature easily makes him an ambassador of the cognoscenti.

**John Robert Ciet:**

Well, I retired for the evening, but just prior to that, Eli invited me to take a trip with him along the coast up to the port of Fundy and Novia Scotia. He didn't tell me the particular reason as to why but other than to say that he enjoyed taking photographs as an amateur photographer and because I wasn't due back to the university for a couple of days, I thought I would oblige his request and his invitation and so the following day we traveled and on several occasions stopped to take photographs of lighthouses. I found it quite interesting he has what one would describe a fetish for lighthouses. Some of the most simple lighthouses seem to intrigue him the most. The elaborate and technologically advanced lighthouses didn't seem to intrigue him much. I think that really speaks to Eli's disposition and a lot of his philosophy that he has of society and politics.

**Narration:**

Described by some to be an incarnation of George Santayana's protagonist Oliver Alden in "The Last Puritan," Eli Khamarov has highly critical views on the affairs of man, which he interprets as quote "arbitrary but made steadfast by centuries of social evolution."

**John Robert Ciet:**

Well, the Bay of Fundy we continued to have some rather invigorating conversations and I caught a glimpse of what I would consider to be Eli's ability to be quite introspective. Many of his statements are quite salient without Eli I think really understanding that they are ... I think that he consistently speaks rather ... introspectively ... unawares. And there were a few quotes that I thought you might find interesting of Eli's. The first one was "Politicians are that rare breed of animal that simultaneously exists at both ends of the food chain." I think that that speaks highly to Eli's cynicism of politics, especially, on the one hand being very critical of politicians, but on the other hand having a sense of compassion for them in how he probably perceives society and the news media feeding upon the politicians and the
political system. The second quote that I found quite elucidating was, and one that was once again very cynical but salient, was that, quote, "The military was created to protect the leisure lifestyles of the ruler class" and then he proceeded to ask if he sounded cynical and, of course, I answered in the affirmative. I often find him to be a little too cynical for my taste, but nevertheless that's Eli and he certainly is a profound individual not to be influenced by the opinions of others.

Narration:
Eli Khamarov has injected his thoughts on society mainly through his books "Lives of the Cognoscenti" and "Surviving on Planet Reebok" and occasional articles in leading contemporary journals. His criticisms of the political spectrum has not endeared him to any side of the political mainstream.

John Robert Ciet:
One other interesting quote that I found out of his book "Surviving on Planet Reebok", a book that certainly speaks to his cynical point of view of our society and I think his negative view of the commercialness of it. He stated that "I exist between the superficial security adopted by the mainstream and the grave reality of the outer fringes. I do not fit into either category, but I am their mediator." Eli has a perception, whether it be accurate, that he doesn't fit into either side of ... of the political realm. He is obviously critical of both sides. He feels like he can identify with them, but he doesn't feel that he is accepted by either side. But I really think that it is a conundrum he has created for himself. He is so critical of both sides that it makes it difficult for either position to be acceptable not only to Eli, but for those political factions to be accepting of Eli.

Narration:
Eli's upbringing would have a lasting effect on his outlook on life. Born a child prodigy, but experiencing the very real limitations of his family's penury, he would have to curtail the many contributions to society he was so eager to make.
John Robert Ciet:

Well, Eli was born an only child in a family of modest means. His father worked in a book bindery and had very little formal education. They, at the time, lived of course in London as I indicated. His father, however, was Russian and his mother German. His father fled the campaigns of Lenin and his mother, much younger than his father, fled Nazi Germany during the 30's. His father became rather frustrated with his working conditions and decided to continue his education and received a master's in education and began teaching school at the university and taught various subjects including world history and political society.

Narration:

Growing up in a highly charged intellectual atmosphere may account for Eli Khamarov's cerebral approach to life, but doesn't necessarily account for his cynicism. It is a cruel paradox that Eli Khamarov's brilliance---already evident early in his life---would have profound negative effects on his adult life. The social ostracism Khamarov experienced would forever cast a long shadow on his interaction with other people, especially with women.

John Robert Ciet:

Well, I gained some insight into Eli's experiences personally back in 1991 when I invited him to my family's home in Vermont for Christmas. He stayed there about three days and we had the occasion to discuss his experiences with women. He certainly has an interesting attitude. I think it is an attitude that's formed over several years. It wasn't an attitude that I think is a defining characteristic of his disposition that was innate, but rather something that was learned, or at least experienced and created. He really feels that women have an upper hand in society and many individuals obviously would disagree with that characterization, but he is quite adamant in that contention. He feels that while politically they may not have the upper hand, he believes that socially they do.

Narration:

Many factors have taken their toll on Khamarov's life: his intellectual and social
upbringing, the military and political events he witnessed as a child, and his resentment toward the academic establishment.

John Robert Ciet:

Eli has certainly undergone a certain metamorphosis during his lifetime. As I indicated, he would certainly characterize himself as an idealist as a young individual, but as he got older and experienced life he became, I think, more brazen towards life and ... along came the cynicism that is a defining characteristic of Eli today. Today I would characterize Eli really as an eclectical gallimaufry of social and political beliefs. One couldn't characterize him as conservative ... as liberal ... as extreme, that is, of course not to say that he doesn't harbor ideas that are conservative, liberal, and extreme, because he certainly does. But as I indicated, I think that speaks to the eclectical nature of his ideology, of his very disposition.

Narration:

Eli Khamarov is one of few individuals whose innate principles have positively affected those who know him and know of him. Never willing to compromise those principles on the basis of social acceptance or material comfort is perhaps one of the many admirable qualities that make Eli Khamarov the extraordinary but enigmatic figure he is.

John Robert Ciet:

"Academia forcibly tells you about all the great men and revolutionaries, and rebels, especially the rebels, who have changed the world for the better. But they wouldn't notice him were he standing right in front of them." I think, really, that the last quote there that I just read is probably a quote that best describes Eli. I think that he perceives himself as a rebel in our society---one who isn't appreciated by the intelligentsia, the academic world, and whether that be the case, Eli believes it to be the case, and in many of his writings and many of his conversations that's ... that's borne out.

Narration:

In his own words, Eli Khamarov has spent his life observing it rather than living it. Perhaps the theme of a lighthouse is rather
befitting to Eli Khamarov himself. He shines forth, a single beacon of light in the darkness of society, a reminder of a better world that never was.

Written, Directed, Photographed and Produced by Jeffrey Frederick Gold

Narrated by George Fivas

Sound by John Woodhouse

Special Thanks to John Robert Ciet

Thanks to John Robert Ciet John Woodhouse George Peter Fivas

Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 34
Enigma Andante
Variation IX (Nimrod) Adagio
Variation XII (B.G.N.) Andante
Composed by Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Cora
Composed by Randy Edelman

I will find you
Performed by Clannad

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