

On the occasion of the conferring of
the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*
upon
John Ralston Saul

Amongst us, there be many creatures: angels, devils, fabulous ones, those that tremble as if they were mad. They all speak to us. We are engulfed in cacophony (cloaked as advice) from experts, from prophets, from leaders. How do we choose a guide on a journey through such a treacherous realm?

In the bestiary of our society, there are some who strive to effect a change -- to open others' eyes -- those who live their life in public for all to see.

It is an inchoate longing in humanity to desire, somehow, to make a difference for our friends, our family, our country, our planet.

His Excellency John Ralston Saul has been the fount of novels and essays which have impelled millions into reflection on their own condition. As a writer, and as an advocate for writers, he reminds us that change can come by feeling, by reflecting, by learning, by challenging, by arguing, by acting.

Mr. Saul has placed the individual at the core of our democratic cosmos. The educated citizen can be the engine of change even when pinioned by the received power structures. And yet, for all his qualities of leadership, he poses the Socratic question of whether we need a guide at all to identify and lead us past our societal Scylla and Charybdis. Shun the beatification of reason. Be wary of an arrogant elite.

Monsieur le Chancelier, je vous présente Monsieur John Ralston Saul, docte dénonciateur des vues étroites, humaniste infatigable au service du bien commun.

Eminent Chancellor, I present to you Mr. John Ralston Saul. Erudite assailant of a corporate confederacy -- pugnacious philosopher of the public good.

Let us applaud this man who abets the examined life -- one of the angels who dance at the eating of an apple from the Tree of Knowledge.

On behalf of the Senate and the University, I invite you to invest His Excellency John Ralston Saul with the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

10 November 2003