

The Guild of St George &
The Ruskin Library and Research
Centre (Lancaster University)
announce

Education for Education's Sake?

A Symposium
at Toynbee Hall

28 Commercial St., London
Saturday, 11 October, 2014
(10am – 4.30pm)

The purpose of this symposium is to look closely at the problems confronting education today. In a time of great educational upheaval, as new types of school proliferate and disagreement persists about access, curricula, standards, teacher training and other issues, we will consider how Ruskin's ideas might productively inform contemporary debates.

The keynote speaker is Prof. Dinah Birch (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Professor of English Literature, University of Liverpool). A panel discussion will be chaired by

Dr Andrew Tate

(University of Lancaster).

The symposium has been organized by Dr Sara Atwood and Paul Tucker.

Participants will include:

Prof. Dinah Birch

Dr Sara Atwood

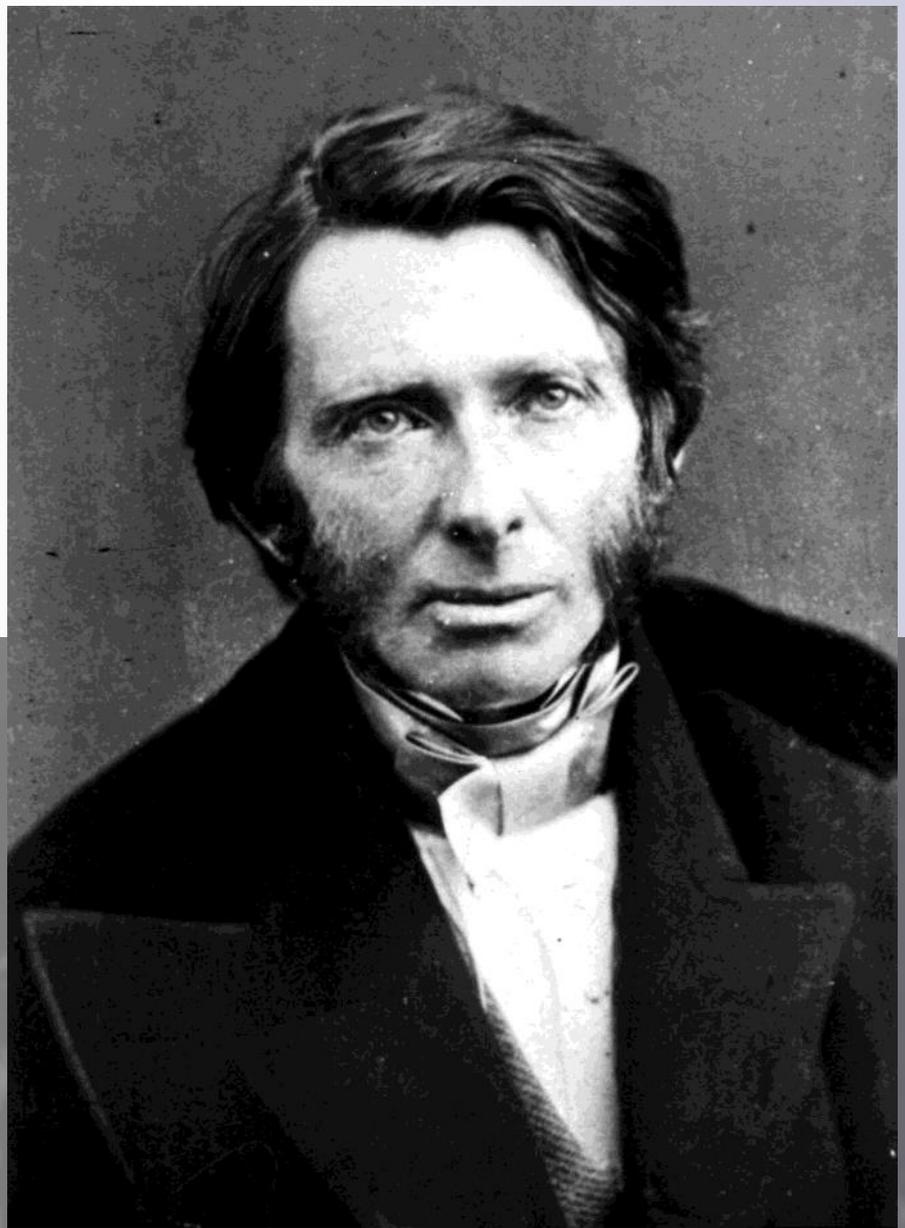
Paul Tucker

Prof. Anthony O'Hear

Melissa Benn

Aonghus Gordon

Dr Andrew Tate



GUILD of St GEORGE



Education for Education's Sake?

A Symposium at Toynbee Hall
28 Commercial Street., London
Saturday, 11 October, 2014
10.00 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME

Talks will take place in the lecture hall.

- 10.00 a.m.** Registration and tea/coffee
- 10.30 a.m.** Welcome
Clive Wilmer, Master of the Guild of St. George
- 10.45 a.m.** Sara Atwood (Guild of St. George)
“A pile of feathers’ :
Valuing education in a market economy”
- 11.30 a.m.** **Keynote Address**
Dinah Birch (Professor of English Literature and
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Liverpool)
“The Demand for Perfection”
- 12.45 p.m.** Lunch *in Ashbee Hall*
- 1.45 p.m.** Paul Tucker (University of Florence and Guild of
St. George)
“Thoughtful labour’ :
Ruskin and the nature of education”

2.30 p.m. Panel Forum

Introduced and chaired by
Dr. Andrew Tate (Lancaster University)

with short presentations by:

Melissa Benn (Writer/Education Campaigner)
“Some thoughts on Ruskin's relevance to present day
debates on education”

Aonghus Gordon (Ruskin Mill Trust)
“Education from the inside out”

Anthony O’Hear (Professor of Philosophy, University of
Buckingham)
“‘You alone can bring them into their right minds’: a few
Ruskinian thoughts on education”

*proceeding to a discussion with all the day’s speakers and
contributions from the floor.*

4.00 p.m. Tea/coffee

4.30 p.m. Close

Despite considerable amounts of time, money and attention devoted to educational issues and reform, we have much yet to learn about what defines a good education. What's more, most of our problems are not new. We've inherited nineteenth-century debates about education and are further than ever from finding workable solutions. Instead, we put our faith in measurement, data, test results and technology. Education is too often viewed as a commodity, and students as consumers. Increasingly, education is understood as merely the accumulation of facts or skills, its ultimate end the production of graduates who will perpetuate the global economy.

Ruskin believed that education meant “leading human souls to what is best, and making what is best out of them.” He warned of the danger of applying market principles to education, understanding that to do so would be to make education simply one more species of exchange. For Ruskin, education properly directed led to a deep and multifaceted way of understanding and engaging with the world. It should combine the practical with the experiential and creative and should be mindful of students' individual aptitudes and circumstances. “Educate or govern,” Ruskin told his readers, “they are one and the same word. ... You are to spend on National Education, and to be spent for it, and to make by it, not more money, but better men.” Ruskin’s ideas suggest new approaches to classroom instruction, practice, and curricula from which we can undoubtedly benefit, but to do so we must also understand the principles that anchor his methodology and that often conflict with today's educational ideology.

The purpose of this symposium will be to look closely at the problems confronting education today. In a time of great educational upheaval, as new types of school proliferate and disagreement persists about access, curricula, standards, teacher training and other subjects, we will consider how Ruskin’s ideas might productively inform our debates.

Organised by Sara Atwood and Paul Tucker.

LECTURES

Dinah Birch

“The Demand for Perfection”

Ruskin always distrusted the hunger for perfection. This lecture will explore the religious, cultural and aesthetic context of this strand of his thought, and its importance to his critical identity. It will go on to consider how ideals of perfection continue to influence our educational strategies, and the ways in which we choose to measure the success (or otherwise) of our children in contemporary schools.

Sara Atwood

“‘A pile of feathers’: Valuing Education in a Market Society”

In recent years, the market has extended its reach ever more alarmingly into schools, universities, and educational reform initiatives in both the UK and the US. More and more, education is equated solely with national and global economic success. Increased emphasis on testing, standardization, and measurement, a decrease in fine arts programmes, and a growing tendency to treat students as consumers, point to a disturbing shift in our understanding of the value of education. At the same time, there is a growing lack of preparedness, curiosity, and cultural literacy amongst students. Ruskin’s vision of education as an ethical, transformative, and communal process offers an alternative vision of the ends of education and might act as a corrective to the many problems we face in modern education.

Paul Tucker

“‘Thoughtful labour’: Ruskin and the nature of education”

This talk will consider education as a process of learning and the asymmetrical relationship between learner and teacher, with the different forms of “thoughtful labour” involved; the educational process as grounded in the fundamental asymmetry of the dialogical situation informing all discourse.

BIOGRAPHIES

Dinah Birch is Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Professor of English Literature at the University of Liverpool. She specialises in Victorian literature, and has published extensively on writers including Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, and Alfred Tennyson. She has written two books on Ruskin (*Ruskin's Myths*, and *Ruskin on Turner*), together with numerous essays and articles on Ruskin's work. She is the editor of a selection from Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera*, and of the World's Classics *John Ruskin: Selected Writings*, and she has also edited novels by Anthony Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot. Her study of the legacies of nineteenth-century educational ideals, *Our Victorian Education*, came out in 2008. She reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *London Review of Books*, and broadcasts regularly on a wide range of literary and cultural topics. Dinah Birch is the General Editor of the most recent edition of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, published in 2009. A concise edition of the *Companion* (edited with Katy Hooper) appeared in 2012.

Melissa Benn is a writer and campaigner. Her journalism and essays have appeared in several anthologies on contemporary culture and politics and in numerous publications including the *Guardian*, *Independent*, *London Review of Books*, *Women: A Cultural Review*, *New Statesman* and *Public Finance*. She has published seven books including two novels, *Public Lives* (1995) and *One of Us* (2008) which was shortlisted for a British Book Award. Her non-fiction work includes several works on education, including *Education and Democracy*, co-edited with Professor Clyde Chitty (2004), *School Wars: The Battle for Britain's Education* (2011) and *Debunking the Seven Myths of Education* with Janet Downs (forthcoming 2014). Her most recent book, *What Should We Tell Our Daughters? The Pleasures and Pressures of Growing Up Female* (2013), was shortlisted for a Politico's Political Book of the Year Award. A passionate advocate of high quality comprehensive education, Melissa is a co-founder of the Local Schools Network, a vice president of the Socialist Education Association and a member of the steering group of Comprehensive Future. She is a frequent speaker on issues relating to contemporary education.

Anthony O'Hear is Professor of Philosophy, University of Buckingham, Director of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, and Editor of *Philosophy*. Prof. O'Hear is the author of many books and articles on philosophy, including

Beyond Evolution: Human Nature and the Limits of Evolutionary Explanation (Oxford University Press, 1997); *Philosophy in the New Century* (Continuum, 2001); and *The Landscape of Humanity* (Imprint Academic, 2008).

Born in Gloucester, UK, **Aonghus Gordon** spent his formative years in Venice. After travelling extensively, whilst studying History of Art, he established the arts and crafts centre at Ruskin Mill in 1982. This initiative additionally engaged excluded youth at risk who required further education. The six centres are braided with the inspiration of John Ruskin and Rudolf Steiner. Aonghus was recently elected a Companion of the Guild of St George. Further centres are opening in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter and Sacramento, California in 2015. In 2005 Ernst & Young named Aonghus 'Social Entrepreneur of the Year'. Aonghus travels and lectures widely, both nationally and internationally. The Field Centre at Ruskin Mill recently opened and offers the Trust's 900 staff a collaborative action research culture into the Trust's unique methods in education validated by the University of the West of England.

Andrew Tate is Senior Lecturer in English at Lancaster University, where he is also Associate Director of the Ruskin Research Centre. He is the author of three books, including *Contemporary Fiction and Christianity* (2008) and is a co-editor of *Literature and the Bible: a Reader* (2013). He has published a number of articles on Ruskin, religion and art.

Sara Atwood's book, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (Ashgate 2011), is a study of Ruskin's educational principles and practice. Her work appears frequently in the *Ruskin Review and Bulletin* and she has contributed essays—on Ruskin and Darwinism, Ruskin and Emerson, and Plato's influence on Ruskin's educational philosophy—to *Nineteenth-Century Prose* and *Carlyle Studies Annual*. She acted as guest editor for a special issue on Ruskin of *Nineteenth-Century Prose* (Autumn 2011). Other publications include an essay in the new edition of Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History* published by Yale University Press (2013). She is preparing an essay on Ruskin as literary critic for a forthcoming special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Prose*. She recently organized and spoke at two Guild-sponsored Ruskin symposia in Berkeley, California. A member of the Guild of St. George, she teaches English literature and composition at Chandler-Gilbert Community College in Chandler, Arizona.

Paul Tucker teaches the History of Art Criticism at the University of Florence. His Ruskin publications include the catalogue entries and essays for the exhibition *Ruskin and Tuscany*, organized by the Guild of St George and the Ruskin Gallery, Sheffield (Lund Humphries, 1993), a monograph on Ruskin as a teacher of drawing, co-authored with Donata Levi (*Ruskin didatta: il disegno tra disciplina e diletto*, Marsilio, 1996), a critical edition of the notebooks Ruskin kept during his 1845 Italian tour (*Résumé of Italian Art and Architecture [1845]*, Scuola Normale Superiore, 2003) and, most recently, a critical edition of the *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* (trans. E. Sdegno, Electa, 2014). Other research interests include the linguistic and rhetorical analysis of art discourse and the history of art collecting in nineteenth-century Europe. He is currently editing the correspondence of Charles Fairfax Murray with Frederic Burton and Wilhelm Bode for the Walpole Society.

Lunch Menu

A selection of sandwiches &
filled artisan rolls

Char-grilled chicken salad
Chef's garden salad

Whole fruits

Sweet cakes

*Tea and coffee will be served on
arrival and departure*

“A pile of feathers’: Valuing Education in a Market Society”

Sara Atwood

Numerical citations refer to volume and page number of *The Works of John Ruskin*. Ed. Cook, E.T. and Wedderburn, Alexander, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903-12).

[Y]ou might read all the books in the British Museum . . . and remain an utterly ‘illiterate’, uneducated person; but if you read ten pages of a good book, letter by letter,—that is to say, with real accuracy,—you are forevermore in some measure an educated person. The entire difference between education and non-education (as regards the merely intellectual part of it), consists in this accuracy.

John Ruskin, “Of Kings’ Treasuries” *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), (18.65).

The main thing which we ought to teach our youth is to see something,—all that the eyes which God has given them are capable of seeing.

John Ruskin, “Logical Education” *Modern Painters IV* (1856) (6.483).

The highest and first law of the universe—and the other name of life is, therefore, help. The other name of death is ‘separation.’ Government and co-operation are in all things and eternally the laws of life. Anarchy and competition, eternally, and in all things, the laws of death.

John Ruskin, *Modern Painters V* (1860), (7.207).

I hear strange talk continually, ‘how difficult it is to make people pay for being educated!’ Why, I should think so! Do you make your children pay for their education, or do you give it them compulsorily, and gratis? You do not expect *them* to pay you for their teaching, except by becoming good children. Why should you expect a peasant to pay for his, except by becoming a good man?—payment enough, I think, if we knew it.

Payment enough to himself, as to us. . . . You do not learn that you may live—you live that you may learn.

John Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866),
(18.502-3).

I know well the common censure by which objections to such futilities of education are met, by the men who have been ruined by them,—the common plea that anything does to ‘exercise the mind upon.’ It is an utterly false one. The human soul, in youth, is not a machine of which you can polish the cogs with any kelp or brickdust near at hand; and, having got it into working order, and good, empty, and oiled serviceableness, start your immortal locomotive, at twenty-five years old or thirty The whole period of youth is one essentially of formation, edification, instruction; I use the words with their weight in them; intaking of stores, establishment of vital habits, hopes and faiths. There is not an hour of it but is trembling with destinies,—not a moment of which, once past, the appointed work can ever be done again, or the neglected blow struck on the cold iron.

John Ruskin, “Logical Education” *Modern Painters* IV (1856), (6.485).

[At the root of] the “antipathy to so-called ‘drudgery’ is the pseudoaristocratic notion, early popularized in America, that one is too good for the fundamental and recurring tasks of domestic order and biological necessity; to dirty one’s hands in the soil or submerge them for very long in soapy water is degrading and brutalizing.

Wendell Berry, “Discipline and Hope” (1972).

Is education possibly a process of trading awareness for things of lesser worth? The goose who trades his is soon a pile of feathers.

Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac* (1949).

You must forget your money, and every other material interest, and educate for education’s sake only! or the very good which you try to bestow will become venomous, and that and your money will be lost

together. And this has been the real cause of failure in our efforts for education hitherto—whether from above or below. There is no honest desire for the thing itself.

John Ruskin, *Time and Tide* (1867),
(17.396).

Educate or govern, they are one and the same word. . . . You are to spend on National Education, and to be spent for it, and to make by it, not more money, but better men;—to get into this British Island the greatest possible number of good and brave Englishmen. *They* are to be your ‘money’s worth.’

John Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive*
(1866), (18.502-3).

A NOTE ABOUT TOYNBEE HALL

We are thrilled to be holding this symposium at Toynbee Hall, where numerous activists shared in a Ruskinian spirit. C. R. Ashbee led a Ruskin Society here; former Guild Master, T. Edmund Harvey, was Warden. But it is J. H.



Whitehouse who exemplifies the interconnections that make the venue so special. He was secretary of Toynbee Hall, a Companion and trustee of the Guild, and it is his collection of Ruskiniana, formed at Bembridge School, that is the basis of the Ruskin Library at the University of Lancaster. Howard Hull, a Companion, and

Director of Brantwood, also worked at Toynbee. Few places could resonate more strongly with the purpose of our symposium.



Toynbee Hall



(Above) J. M. W. Turner, *The Fighting Temeraire* (1838)

(Below) John Ruskin, *Study of a Kingfisher* (c. 1871)



For further information about the Guild of St George, please visit our website at www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk and/or write to the Secretary, Dr Stuart Eagles (secretary@guildofstgeorge.org.uk) at The Eyrie, 90 Water Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2NN.