

Is Education a "pastime" or a "way of life"?

Post by "wbernys" of May 28, 2026 at 6:32 PM

An interesting passage is in Diogenes Laertius 138, which seems to have conflicting translations of education either being a hobby or skill. Inwood and Gerson translate it as

Quote

as Diogenes too says in book twenty of the Selections; he also says that basic education is a [form of] pastime.

Other people translate it as "recreation" including White (2021) This seems to imply that "basic education" is a hobby or a way to spend one's leisure? Like studying history of poetics for fun. This would seem to make Epicurus more friendly to Poetics than assumed, like Plutarch records Epicurus as saying the wise man will enjoy festivals, so long as it's kept clear of philosophy or assigned false importance. Alternatively this could be somewhat dismissive as saying that poetics is "only" a pastime at best and not something inherently noble.

Otherwise Bailey and Mensch translate it as

Quote

So Diogenes says too in the 20th book of *Miscellanies*, and he adds that education is a 'way of life. (Bailey)

This seems to imply that Education is like a skill, and in line with the context being the discussion on virtues this makes a good deal of sense of saying education tells us how to pass life in a respectable manner. Education is for the training of the how to live a pleasant life.

The Greek is καθά φησι καὶ Διογένης ἐν τῇ εἰκοστῇ τῶν Ἐπιλέκτων, ὃς καὶ διαγωγὴν λέγει τὴν ἀγωγὴν.