

Episode Ninety-Seven - The Virtues as Instrumental For Pleasure: Temperance and Courage

Post by "Don" of December 10, 2021 at 3:17 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

a small cup of light wine

Thanks for that!

I find it interesting that that phrase above is the word οινιδιον oinidion which is just a diminutive of "wine" οίνος oinos. Plus it appears to only show up in a couple places with some inscriptions and that one mention in DL book X being most of them.

PS. Diminutives: "Ancient Greek suffixes that are derived from a base word to convey endearment, small size or small intensity." (Wiktionary)

So, with so few attested usages of οινιδιον, it's hard to say what is actually being conveyed. I've seen some articles that say diminutives were sometimes just alternative forms of the word, οινιδιον just could have meant "wine." I've also seen some translators use "inferior wine" but I see no reason why Epicureans would choose inferior wine. Some possibilities from the Wiktionary definition to me could be:

- endearment: precious or favorite wine. They had a particularly favorite vintage or supplier.
- small size: They drank small cups, but that doesn't seem noteworthy. It also doesn't address the beverage. You'd think there would be a mention of the cup but it's not; it's the beverage (juxtaposed with water)
- small intensity: This one makes the most sense to me. The wine typically drunk in the Garden was less potent, maybe not fermented as long, maybe with more water added (as was common) especially since water is also mentioned next. So maybe the passage is getting at the idea that some added a "little wine" to their water and others just stuck with the plain spring water or rain water.

The mixing of wine and water goes back way into the history of Ancient Greece, mentioned even in the Odyssey (1.110):

[110] some were mixing wine and water for them in bowls, others again were washing the tables with porous sponges and setting them forth, while still others were portioning out meats in abundance.

What Telemachus greets Athena with soon after that excerpt strikes me as almost a version of the greeting posted at the entrance to the Garden:

“Hail, stranger; in our house thou shalt find entertainment and then, when thou hast tasted food, thou shalt tell of what thou hast need.”

[Homer, Odyssey, Book 1, line 80](#)