

Epicurean Criticism of Socrates (Including Article By Mark Riley)

Post by "Cassius" of February 4, 2026 at 11:13 AM

A copy of the Mark Riley article, which gives the most information about this, is [here](#).

Here are a few other collected notes:

Criticism of Socratic Irony

Citation: Cicero, *Brutus* 85, 292 (= [Fragment 231 Usener](#))

Text: "It marks a man as free from conceit, and at the same time witty, when discussing wisdom, to deny it to himself and to attribute it playfully to those who make pretensions to it. Thus Socrates in the pages of Plato praises to the skies Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus, Gorgias, and the rest, while representing himself as without knowledge of anything and a mere ignoramus. This somehow fits his character, **and I cannot agree with Epicurus who censures it** [*nec Epicuro, qui id reprehendit, assentior*]."

In this passage, Cicero explicitly states that Epicurus disapproved of (*reprehendit* - censured, criticized) Socratic irony.

Criticism of Socrates' Behavior at Banquets

Citation: Diogenes Laertius 10.119 (= [Fragment 63 Usener](#))

This section states: "Nor will he ever indulge in drunkenness, says Epicurus, **in his Banquet**, nor will he entangle himself in affairs of state."

Scholars interpret this as an implicit criticism of Socrates' behavior at banquets as depicted in Plato's *Symposium*, where Socrates famously outdrinks everyone.

Additional Context

The academic article by Mark T. Riley, "[The Epicurean Criticism of Socrates](#)" (*Phoenix* 34, 1980, pp. 55-68), provides comprehensive analysis of these criticisms and notes that "**Socrates seems to have been the great antagonist to the Epicureans.**"