

# [Socrates and epicurus and life after death philosophy essay](https://assignbuster.com/socrates-and-epicurus-and-life-after-death-philosophy-essay/)

The idea of death is discussed by both Socrates and Epicurus, with both philosophers having a mutual belief that it should not be feared. Socrates’ view is that there is either an afterlife, or that death is an eternal sleep. Whereas Epicurus bases his belief on the fact that we should not fear that which does not inflict suffering. In this paper, I will examine both Epicurus’ and Socrates’ view on death and argue why I feel Socrates’ view on death is more rational than Epicurus’.

If we begin with Socrates and his idea of life after death, we can see that he implies death brings the soul to a better place. In Socrates’ final speech to the congress that denounces him to death, he states that “ either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another” (Plato, p. 8). His reasoning for this view is that death will free him from judgment associated with his present life, and allow him to face judgment by the true judges outside of the present world. He states that once he dies, he would be able to “ converse with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay if this be true, let me die again and again” (Plato, p. 8)”. This again re-iterates the fact that Socrates feels that his death sentence should not be seen as a bad or painful event. Furthermore, Socrates’ other view on death is that if it is anything like a sleep in which there was no disturbances by dreams, anyone would agree that it is a pleasant state of being (Plate, p. 8).

In the works of Epicurus’ Principal Doctrines, we are introduced to his distinct views on death. His reason for not fearing death is the absence of suffering; if one does not suffer through death, then one shall not have a reason to fear death. Everyone is either alive or dead, death does not cause suffering to the living since we are not yet dead, and death does not cause suffering to the dead simply because they are dead and have no feelings (Epicurus, pp. 26-28)1. Therefore, fear should only be present if one undergoes suffering, and since one does not experience suffering during death, then death should not be feared.

When comparing both philosophers, it is evident that Socrates’ view of death is more credible than Epicurus’. In Socrates’ view of death, there are two possible outcomes, either eternal sleep or an afterlife. Socrates provides possible ends to post death, whereas Epicurus’ definition is perplex and draws several questions, such as his classification of pleasure and justice.

As with most philosophers, Socrates’ views weren’t shy of criticism. Most critics of his work question the idea whether an after-life may even exist. It is easy to diminish such an argument since Socrates was never concrete about his view of the after-life, he himself thought of a possibility of a death without an after-life. To this, Socrates argues that if there were no after-life, it would be a state of nothingness, and would be a state of eternal sleep which would be as enjoyable as an afterlife, enjoyed in the same sense as much as a dreamless sleep is enjoyed. Another criticism to Socrates’ work is by the author Thomas Nagel in his writing Death. In his writing Nagel criticizes Socrates’ view of a conclusive life stating that death cuts short the ability of people to live a just life as long as possible, and asks the question if one were to achieve a just life, wouldn’t they want to achieve it for as long as possible. Socrates replies stating that if it was truly a just life, it would be fulfilling regardless of the amount of time.

In contrast, Epicurus’ rebuttals to his critics are not as concrete as Socrates’. Epicurus’ perception of death creates confusion in regard to his idea of pleasure and justice. He had stated in his context that “ it is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and honorably and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and honorably and justly without living pleasantly” (Epicurus, p. 26). Hence, Epicurus’ definition of justice lies in the pleasure of the majority of people. His belief had only risen among his own thoughts and not others since he based the affiliation between justice, pleasure, honour and wisdom on the single supposition that the majority of people would reciprocate these same beliefs, yet not everyone feels the same.

Epicurus’ design of justice can be closely related to the Holocaust, also known as World War II. The persuasive Adolf Hitler took charge of the destruction during this time period by compelling the majority of the country to absorb his political views as he governed that it was the best for all of them. Hitler’s forceful method is seen as plausible through Epicurus’ theory, since the greater part of the country found pleasure in his views in thinking that they were prospering the country. Epicurus justifies the notion of murder by inducing rationality into the picture, the more rational one thinks, then the more logical they will act, hence preventing deadly acts from occurring. Hitler had solely relied on swaying people into believing that his path was the only rational path that can lead their country justice. Epicurus too fell on this proposition in using only raw thoughts to conclude his theory that his definition of justice and pleasure would be consented amongst everyone. Culture, religion and society all influence a person’s perception on the simplest fixations. From this notion, it is evident to see that Epicurus’ proposal of allowing rationality to claim superiority over murderous intention is a result of his unproven beliefs. Epicurus was too naÃ¯ve in thinking that everyone would side on his definition of justice and pleasure, concluding him with an imprecise theory. Residing on purely rationality does not validate Epicurus’ theory of justice and pleasure, for anyone can rationalize any means of destruction through their own perception. As mentioned before, there are several concepts that are taken into consideration when a person performs an act, and depending on just one thought is not an erroneous way to justify a theory. considering the complexity of the human mind and Therefore, purely assuming that through rational thinking, murderous thought can be eliminated is not so simple, for human minds are too complex for such a generalization to have effect.

In comparison to both perspective of Socrates and Epicurus, Socrates had a more justifiable and plausible method to his beliefs, hence making it more persuasive that Epicurus. Socrates had a solid foundation and a reasonable definition to his idea, whereas Epicurus simply presumed on rational thinking to motive his beliefs. Therefore in my opinion I would choose Socrates, for her had a realistic ground by taking into consideration the complexity of the human mind and addressing both possibilities to our end.