

Was Epicurus Influenced by Xenophanes?

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 6, 2026 at 9:30 AM

We can see the Epicurean understanding of the gods in Principal Doctrine 01, the Letter to Menoecus, and in Lucretius. And perhaps Epicurus was influenced by Xenophanes ideas (which also came down through Plato/Aristotle, but Epicurus forms different conclusions). I'm thinking that by studying this we can come to a greater understanding of [PD01](#). Do we already have threads on this elsewhere? [Bryan](#) ?

The following is a quote from Stanford.edu website:

Quote

...we may infer from the concluding call to pay due honor to the gods in Xenophanes' B1 that an attribution of scandalous conduct would be incompatible with the goodness or perfection any divine being must be assumed to possess (cf. Aristotle *Meta.* 1072b; Plato, *Rep.* 379b.)

In the well-known fragments B14-16, Xenophanes comments on the general tendency of human beings to conceive of divine beings in human form:

Quote

But mortals suppose that gods are born,
wear their own clothers and have a voice and body. (B14)

Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black;
Thracians that theirs are are blue-eyed and red-haired. (B16)

B15 adds, probably in a satirical vein, that if horses and oxen had hands and could draw pictures, their gods would look remarkably like horses and oxen.

Source:

[Xenophanes \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)