

The dark Epicureanism in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

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The following is from Wikipedia:

"FitzGerald emphasized the religious skepticism he found in Omar Khayyam.^[10] In his preface to the *Rubáiyát*, he describes Omar's philosophy as [Epicurean](#) and claims that Omar was "hated and dreaded by the Sufis,..."

Quote

The extreme popularity of FitzGerald's work led to a prolonged debate on the correct interpretation of the philosophy behind the poems. FitzGerald emphasized the religious skepticism he found in Omar Khayyam.^[10] In his preface to the *Rubáiyát*, he describes Omar's philosophy as [Epicurean](#) and claims that Omar was "hated and dreaded by the Sufis, whose practice he ridiculed and whose faith amounts to little more than his own when stripped of the Mysticism and formal recognition of Islamism under which Omar would not hide".^[11] [Richard Nelson Frye](#) also emphasizes that Khayyam was despised by a number of prominent contemporary Sufis. These include figures such as [Shams Tabrizi](#), [Najm al-Din Daya](#), [Al-Ghazali](#), and [Attar](#), who "viewed Khayyam not as a fellow-mystic, but a free-thinking scientist".^[7]: 663-664 The skeptic interpretation is supported by the medieval historian [Al-Qifti](#) (ca. 1172-1248), who in his *The History of Learned Men* reports that Omar's poems were only outwardly in the Sufi style but were written with an anti-religious agenda. He also mentions that Khayyam was indicted for impiety and went on a [pilgrimage](#) to avoid punishment.^[12]



Omar Khayyam, painting by [Adelaide Hanscom](#) (c. 1910).