

fayḍ

(Arabic: “emanation”), in Islāmic philosophy, the emanation of created things from God. The word is not used in the Qur’ān (Islāmic scripture), which uses terms such as *khalq* (“creation”) and *ibdā’* (“invention”) in describing the process of creation. Early Muslim theologians dealt with this subject only in simple terms as stated in the Qur’ān, namely, that God had ordered the world to be, and it was. Later Muslim philosophers, such as al-[Fārābī](#) (10th century) and [Avicenna](#) (11th century) under the influence of Neoplatonism conceived of creation as a gradual process. Generally, they proposed that the world came into being as the result of God’s superabundance. The creation process takes a gradual course, which begins with the most perfect level and descends to the least perfect—the world of matter. The degree of perfection is measured by the distance from the first emanation, for which all creative things yearn. The soul, for example, is trapped in the body and will always long for its release from its bodily prison to join the world of spirits, which is closer to the [first cause](#) and therefore more perfect.

Al-Fārābī and Avicenna held that God emanates not out of necessity but out of a free act of will. This process is spontaneous because it arises from God’s natural goodness, and it is eternal because God is always superabundant. Al-[Ghazālī](#) (a Muslim theologian of the 11th century) refuted the *fayḍ* theory on the grounds that it lowers God’s role in the creation to mere natural causality. God, al-Ghazālī maintained, creates with absolute will and freedom, and theories of necessary overflowing and emanation lead logically to the denial of the absoluteness of the divine active will.

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