

# ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE EMOTIONS AND THE MORAL LIFE

*Theology for the Laity Course*  
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## LECTURE 3: The Irascible Passions

	Thing perceived as arduous, future good	Thing perceived as arduous, future evil
Perceived as possible	<b>Hope</b>	<b>Daring</b>
Perceived as impossible	<b>Despair</b>	<b>Fear</b>

### Anger

- HOPE
  - Hope is the most fundamental of the irascible passions. We hope for a thing that we perceive to be *good*, in the *future* (not yet attained), *arduous* or *difficult* to attain, but *possible* to attain.
  - What determines whether the passion of hope will be activated or not is not the *actual* possibility of attaining the difficult good, but the person's *apprehension* of that possibility. Depending on whether the person's apprehension conforms to reality or not, there is *true hope* or *false hope*.
    - Experience as a cause of hope: *learning from one's own experience, being persuaded by the experience of others*

- DESPAIR
  - Despair is the passion that arises in the face of an arduous, future good which is perceived to be *impossible to attain*.
  - If I perceive an arduous, future good to be *possible to attain* (hope), I approach it/move forward toward it. If I perceive an arduous, future good to be *impossible to attain* (despair), I withdraw from it.
    - With regard to any particular, *finite good*, it is possible that despair can be the reasonable response (not all finite goods are possible to attain).
  
- FEAR
  - Fear arises in the face of an imminent, threatening *evil*, which I judge to be *impossible* to overcome, conquer, or avoid.
    - Dispositions to apprehending something as an object of fear: *love, defect*
    - Three species of fear deriving from a person's apprehension of his own acts or capacities: *sluggishness, shamefacedness, shame*
    - Three species of fear deriving from a person's judgment that things outside of himself surpass his power: *astonishment, stupor, anxiety*
  
- DARING
  - Contrary to fear is the passion of *daring*, which arises in the face of an imminent, threatening evil, which I judge to be *possible* to overcome, conquer, or avoid.
    - Fear turns *away* from the threatening evil, whereas daring turns *on* the threatening danger in order to conquer it.
  
- ANGER
  - Anger is complex: it contains one element perceived as *good*: vindication, and another element perceived as *evil*: an offense against oneself.
    - The passion of anger requires an act of reason: a judgment that "a wrong has been committed and steps must be taken to set it right."
    - Thus, what is key to *good/virtuous* anger (as opposed to *evil/immoderate* anger) is a *right judgment of reason*: about the evil that has been done, and about how it should be redressed.
  - "Anger fails only in this: that it does not obey the precept of reason in seeking vindication." (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 46, a. 6)