***The immortal soul and its internal movements***

* In paragraph 147 of the *Passions*, Descartes presents the curious

concept of *internal movements of the soul.*

* Internal movements are incited by the *soul itself*. And it is this peculiarity of theirs that differentiates them from *all affects*, for affects are always generated and sustained by some action of *bodily spirits* (§27). Are these internal motions to be even called affects then? Or are they something else?
* Moreover, it is these very movements that in the end define, *how we really are*. (What follows from this for the “superficial” passions? Do they lose their importance?)
* How can this definition of internal e-motions be reconciled with Descartes’ closing claim that all good and evil in this life depends on affects? (§212)

***“And although these movements are often connected with passions that are alike them, they can also occur by other ones, or even arise from those which are their opposite.” (§147)***

* How can we *distinguish* our internal e-motions (that defines the overall “mood” of our existence) from “superficial” affects, since they can be in contrast or even contradiction to one another?
* A possible interpretation: the “deepest” movements of the soul are defined by their *durability*. The more permanent a motion of the soul is, the more internal. We can recognize a “deep” motion by the fact that it *lasts over* the superficial ones.

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* This interpretation goes together with Descartes’ claim from one of his letters to Princess Elisabeth (1. September 1645), in which he states that bodily passions have *almost no duration*, whereas the soul itself is capable of a joy as permanent as itself.
* Internal and lasting movements of the soul are a key to understanding the author’s morals and overall conception of living well. (See e.g. the second passage on the second page of the handout) After all, *generosity*, the highest form of virtue, consists in a “human being feeling a firm and *permanent* decision to use his will well” (§153).

Passage from letter to Elisabeth (1. September 1645):

“But the principal difference between the pleasures of the body and those of the mind consists in this: the body is subject to perpetual change, and even its conservation and its well-being depend on this change; so all the pleasures proper to it hardly last. For these proceed only from the acquisition of something that is useful to the body at the moment it receives them, and as soon as this something ceases to be useful to it, the pleasures also cease. On the other hand, the pleasures of the soul can be as immortal as can it, so long as they have a foundation so solid that neither knowledge of the truth nor any false belief can destroy it.“

Passage from letter to Elisabeth (6. October 1645):

“It is easy to prove that the pleasure of the soul in which true happiness consists is not inseparable from the gaiety and ease of the body, as much from the example of tragedies,

which please us more the more they excite sadness in us, as from those of the exercises of the body, such as hunting, tennis, and other similar exercises, which do not cease to be agreeable even if they are very difﬁcult. We even ﬁnd that often fatigue and difﬁculty augment pleasure. The cause of the contentment the soul receives from these exercises consists in that they make it notice the strength, or the skill, or some other perfection of the body to which it is joined. But the contentment that it has from crying upon seeing some pitiable and disastrous action represented in the theater comes principally from its seeming to it that it is doing something virtuous in having compassion for the afﬂicted. And generally, the soul is pleased in feeling itself moved by passions, no matter what nature they are, so long as it remains in control.”