

Two notes on the tongue:

The tongue is composed of skeletal muscles and can be willingly controlled. The tongue is able to move in nearly every direction; it can expand, compress and display a fine degree of articulation. The sensations caused by the movements of the tongue inside the mouth, against the floor of the mouth, the soft tissue, and the teeth are suppressed – disregarded as sensational impressions – during simple, and semi-advanced, speech. No thinking. The careful and precise composition of words is more than enough to attend to. The articulation of the word ‘burrito’, for instance (an arbitrary word), requires use of two of the intrinsic muscles (two out of four), and all four of the extrinsic muscles. The tongue rolls left and snaps back whip-like from the hard palate, dips down behind the available incisors, curls and slowly swells like a sponge before turning right, holding, and then kicking out against the uppermost gland.

The tongue is the machine in question, the piston!, and the philharmonic conductor of the mouth. It smacks and jerks and twitches – all in perfect control. But as Orator, it would be useless (and ridiculous, like a mime) without the surrounding faucial arches, oral cavity and everything else that’s around to knock against. Hidden (preferably) like a teleprompter. It makes the maker understood.

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The tongue is covered in numerous taste buds – thousands of them – coated in a sustained veneer of saliva, drool and spit. Phonetic articulation is merely a secondary function, the primary being gustatory potential.

The upper surface of the tongue is rich in nerves and blood vessels (and saliva). Every part of the tongue has receptors for each basic taste. (The tongue is not divided into sections, as was formerly taught in school: the sour right, salty left, sweet tip and bitter back.) The tongue also helps detect the tactile, thermal and even painful stimuli that give food and drink their flavor.

When drinking and eating, the aliments are, by instinctive default, tossed around in the mouth to maximize their effect on the taste buds. The saliva helps break down the particulars of an alimentary substance. When eating a hot, hard-boiled egg with salt and dill, the dill is the first to hit the receptors. Then, along with the salt, it creates a shock of sensation that also prepares the taste buds for less overpowering flavors to come. The comparably large quantities of albumen hit next, rapidly reorienting the nerve endings, as the egg is smushed and the savory yolk ignites the sweet and sour

receptors. Outside of thought, teeth and tongue work the egg together to complete its disintegration before swallowing begins. As the egg breaks down, the taste receptors harness all available flavors, welcome or not, until the saliva completely overwhelms the food and the flavors fade. This consummates the process of tasting. The eating of edibles and drinking of drinkables is a source of much happiness and fulfillment in the lives of most people.

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