



Did Aristotle say that women were defective?

Yes, he did. Aristotle believed that males were superior, and females were inferior. Warning: This next bit of information might shock you. Aristotle based his belief that men were complete/preferred because they could produce semen, while women could not. Because of this ability/lack of ability, Aristotle considered men superior and women as “defective males.” In his multiple, influential volumes of writings he stated:

“The female is as it were a deformed male.”

*“A boy resembles a woman in physique, and a woman is an infertile male... lacking the power to concoct semen...because of the coldness of its nature.” **

Aristotle’s “Scientific Thoughts”

Around 350 B.C. the philosopher Aristotle wrote many scientific books. One he entitled, *On the Generation of Animals*. In it, he described how animals reproduce, specifically humans. He observed that the physical head of a human contained a variety of fluid-like substances—from the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. He reasoned that the physical head of men also generated and contained fluid called semen which contained “tiny, fully formed humans.” He thought semen traveled down the spinal column, out of the man’s body, and into the woman’s body.

In Aristotle’s view, A MAN’S PHYSICAL HEAD WAS THE SOURCE OF LIFE!

Men could produce sperm and women could not - therefore, women were deficient, defective, and deformed. While men generated the seed of life, women were simply the “dirt” that received the seed. Aristotle taught that women gave nothing to the child except a place for life to grow.

KEPHALE = HEAD = SOURCE OF LIFE

Who cares what Aristotle thought?

Aristotle influenced Western civilization for centuries! He promoted male superiority and female inferiority. He taught a man’s head was where life began. The Apostle Paul wrote his letters to Greek audiences who would share the same worldview as Aristotle. When Paul used the word *kephale* (head), he knew his audience would think of “the place where life originates” or “the source of life and nourishment” or “where something comes from” or “beginning point.” (See *Isn’t man the “head” of the woman?*). Context matters. Paul in Colossians 2:19 explained the effect of disconnection with the *kephale*... a loss of growth (not a loss of vision, leadership or direction). **“They have lost connection with the head (kephale), from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.”** Paul’s audience did not think *kephale* meant “boss of the department” or “authority” or “leader.” If Paul wanted to speak of authority, he would have chosen the common Greek word for authority—*exousia*.

Conclusion

Aristotle shaped culture. When Paul used the word *kephale* (head), his first century Greek audience would likely share Aristotle’s view and think of body imagery. Again, *kephale* rarely meant “authority.” But “origin of life, growth, and nourishment” makes perfect sense.

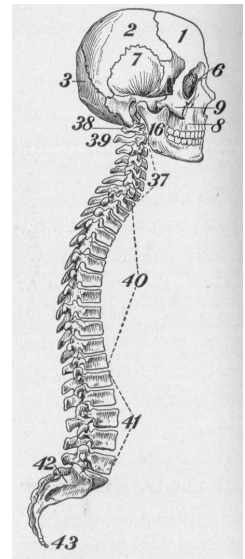
* Aristotle Sources

The Generation of Animals 2.3 (737a) and 1.20 (728a)

Key Term

κεφαλη

kephale



4 Crucial Questions

1. What does this teach us about **GOD**?
2. What does this teach us about **PEOPLE**?
3. What command should I **OBEY**?
4. With whom can I **SHARE** this?