

THE SQUARE OF OPPOSITION

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1 *Aristotle's View* In the *Organon* Aristotle recognized that a statement could be denied in more than one way. The place of the Greek οὐ, the Latin *non*, and the English *not* in a statement determines how it is to be denied. As it turns out, none of these modes of denial is rendered by the modern logician's notion of propositional negation. Indeed, for Aristotle only two sorts of things can be denied: (i) terms themselves (e.g., from 'man' we get 'not-man' and from 'ill' we get 'not-ill')¹; and (ii) predicates can be denied of subjects. The negation of a statement is taken in the sense of (ii) rather than the modern propositional sense, for he says that "we mean by negation a statement denying one thing of another".²

In the statement 'Socrates is ill', 'is ill' is the *predicate* and 'ill' is the *predicate term*. We negate the statement by denying the predicate of the subject. And we deny a predicate by attaching the denial operator 'not' to it (rather than by attaching the denial operator to the predicate term). So the negation of 'Socrates is ill' is 'Socrates is not ill', i.e., the denial of ill to Socrates. If, however, we attach the denial operator to the predicate *term*, we get 'Socrates is not-ill', a statement which is in fact an affirmation of not-ill to Socrates. Given some affirmative statement and the two modes of denial, we can generate what Aristotle called "the four".

Supposing, I mean, the verb 'is' to be added to 'just' or 'not-just', we shall have two affirmative judgements; supposing that 'is not' is added, we then have two negative judgements. Together these make up the four. This the subjoined examples makes clear:—

Affirmations	Negations
Man is just	Man is not just
Man is not-just	Man is not not-just ³

1. See *On Interpretations*, Chapter II.

2. *Ibid.*, 17a26. All quotations, unless specified otherwise, are from the Loeb translation.

3. *Ibid.*, 19b24-30.