COUNTEREXAMPLES IN THE THEORY OF NONSELFADJOINT OPERATOR ALGEBRAS

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In this note we announce the answers to several questions which involve nonselfadjoint operator algebras. Detailed proofs will appear elsewhere.

We use the following notation. \( \mathcal{H} \) is a separable Hilbert space, \( \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \) is the algebra of bounded linear operators on \( \mathcal{H} \), and \( \mathcal{B}_1(\mathcal{H}) \) is the ideal of trace class operators on \( \mathcal{H} \). For \( T \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \), \( \{T\}' \) is the commutant of \( T \) and \( \{T\}'' \) is the double commutant of \( T \).

\( \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \) is the dual of \( \mathcal{B}_1(\mathcal{H}) \) (see [2]) so that \( \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \) has a weak * topology. \( \mathcal{A}(T) \) denotes the smallest weak * closed algebra containing \( T \) and \( I \), while \( \mathcal{W}(T) \) is the smallest weak operator closed algebra containing \( T \) and \( I \). \( \text{Lat} T \) is the lattice of (closed) invariant subspaces of \( T \), and \( \text{Alg Lat} T = \{B \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) : \text{Lat} T \subset \text{Lat} B\} \). It is elementary that \( \mathcal{A}(T) \subset \mathcal{W}(T) \subset \{T\}'' \subset \{T\}' \), that \( \mathcal{W}(T) \subset \text{Alg Lat} T \), and that all of these sets except \( \mathcal{A}(T) \) are weakly closed algebras. Further, \( T \) is said to be reflexive if \( \mathcal{W}(T) = \text{Alg Lat} T \).

We will consider the following questions.

**QUESTION 1.** Does \( \mathcal{W}(T) = \{T\}' \cap \text{Alg Lat} T \) for all \( T \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \)?

**QUESTION 2.** Does \( \mathcal{W}(T) = \{T\}'' \cap \text{Alg Lat} T \) for all \( T \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \)?

**QUESTION 3.** Must \( T^{(n)} \) be reflexive, for all \( T \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \) and for all \( n > 1 \)? (Here \( T^{(n)} \) denotes the direct sum of \( n \) copies of \( T \).)

**QUESTION 4.** If \( T_1 \) and \( T_2 \) are reflexive operators, must \( T_1 \oplus T_2 \) be reflexive?

**QUESTION 5.** Does \( \mathcal{A}(T) = \mathcal{W}(T) \) for all \( T \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \)?

**QUESTION 6.** Does \( \mathcal{W}(T) \) have a separating vector for all \( T \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \)?

Before stating the last question, we need some additional notation. Since \( \mathcal{W}(T) \) is weak * closed in \( \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \), \( \mathcal{W}(T) \) is a dual space, with predual \( \mathcal{W}(T)_* = \mathcal{B}_1(\mathcal{H})/\mathcal{W}(T)_\perp \). Here \( \mathcal{W}(T)_\perp \) denotes the preannihilator of \( \mathcal{W}(T) \). For each \( n \), let \( F_n \subset \mathcal{B}_1(\mathcal{H}) \) denote the set of operators of rank \( \leq n \).

**QUESTION 7.** Is \( F_n/\mathcal{W}(T)_\perp \) dense in \( \mathcal{W}(T)_* \) for all \( T \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \)?

Some remarks regarding these questions are in order. There are some relations among the questions. For \( n = 1, 2, \) or \( 6 \), an affirmative answer to Question \( n \) implies an affirmative answer to Question \( n + 1 \).

Question 1 was raised independently by D. Sarason and P. Rosenthal (see [6, p. 195] and [7]). Rosenthal also asked Question 2 in [7]. In [4], J. Deddens listed several open questions, including Questions 3 and 4, concerning reflexive operators.

Question 5 has been raised by many people. The question appears in [2]. In [8], D. Westwood gave an example of an operator \( T \) so that \( \mathcal{A}(T) = \mathcal{W}(T) \) but so that the weak and weak * topologies are different on \( \mathcal{A}(T) \).

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Questions 6 and 7 were raised by D. Larson in a private communication. The motivation for the questions arose from the following. There has been intense research activity (see [1, 2, and 3], e.g.) on operators \( T \) such that every weak * continuous linear functional on \( \mathcal{W}(T) \) is represented by a rank one operator. (Thus \( T \) satisfies \( \mathcal{W}(T)_* = F_1/\mathcal{W}(T)_{\perp} \).) There are operators \( T \) which do not have this property (see [5 and 1]), but for these operators \( T \), \( F_1/\mathcal{W}(T)_{\perp} \) is dense in \( \mathcal{W}(T)_* \).

We have been able to show that all seven of these questions have a negative answer. The key to the construction of the counterexamples is the following theorem.

**Theorem.** Let \( \mathcal{H} \) and \( \mathcal{K} \) be separable Hilbert spaces with \( \dim \mathcal{K} = \infty \).
Let \( S \) be a weakly closed subspace of \( \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \). Then there is an operator \( T \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H} \oplus \mathcal{K} \oplus \mathcal{H}) \) of form

\[
T = \begin{pmatrix}
0 & P & 0 \\
0 & W & Q \\
0 & 0 & 0
\end{pmatrix}
\]

so that \( \mathcal{W}(T) \) splits as an independent direct sum: \( \mathcal{W}(T) = \mathcal{B}(T) \oplus \hat{S} \), where

\[
\hat{S} = \{ A \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H} \oplus \mathcal{K} \oplus \mathcal{H}) : A_{1,3} \in S \text{ and } A_{i,j} = 0 \text{ if } (i,j) \neq (1,3) \} \text{ and } \mathcal{B}(T) = \{ A \in \mathcal{W}(T) : A_{1,3} = 0 \}.
\]

We now indicate how this theorem settles Question 1. Let \( \mathcal{H} = \mathbb{C}^2 \) and let \( S \) be the set of trace zero operators on \( \mathcal{H} \). Then \( S \) is a transitive subspace of \( \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \). This means (see [1]) that \( Sx = \mathcal{H} \) for all \( x \in \mathcal{H}, x \neq 0 \). Construct \( T \) as in the theorem, so that \( \mathcal{W}(T) = \mathcal{B}(T) \oplus \hat{S} \). Now every \( A \in \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \) is nonzero only in its \((1,3)\) entry, so \( AT = TA = 0 \) and \( A \in \{ T \}' \). Also, using transitivity of \( S \), it is easy to see that \( A \in \text{Alg Lat } T \). \( S \) is a proper subspace, so \( \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \) is not contained in \( \mathcal{W}(T) \) and we have a counterexample. We note that this example was motivated in part by the excellent survey of some finite dimension results which appears in the beginning of the paper [1] of E. Azoff.

It is easy to check that choosing \( S = \mathcal{B}(\mathcal{H}) \) in the theorem yields a counterexample to Questions 6 and 7. Some additional information on the structure of the subspace \( \mathcal{B}(T) \) is required in order to give examples settling the remaining questions.

We now outline the proof of the theorem. We identify \( \mathcal{K} \) with \( \bigoplus_1^\infty \mathcal{H} \). In the matrix for \( T \) let \( P \) be the isometry of \( \mathcal{H} \) into \( \mathcal{K} \) with matrix \((1 \ 0 \ 0 \ \cdots)\). Let \( W \) be a backward operator weighted shift with weight sequence \((w_n I)\) to be specified later. Thus \( W \) has matrix \((W_{i,j})\) where \( W_{n,n+1} = w_n I, n \geq 1 \), and all other entries = 0. Let \( C \) be a countable weakly dense set in the unit ball of \( S \). Let \((Q_n)\) be a sequence in \( C \) so that each \( C \in C \) appears infinitely often in \((Q_n)\). Since \( Q \) is to be an operator from \( K \) to \( \mathcal{H} \), we think of \( Q \) as an operator matrix with one column. Let the \( n \)th entry of this column be \( b_n Q_n \). Here we assume \( b_n \neq 0 \ \forall n \) and that \((b_n) \in l^2 \). This insures that \( Q \) is bounded.
If \( n \geq 1 \), then
\[
T^{n+1} = \begin{pmatrix}
0 & PW^n & PW^{n-1}Q \\
0 & W^{n+1} & W^nQ \\
0 & 0 & 0
\end{pmatrix}.
\]

Now \( PW^{n-1}Q = \lambda_n Q_n \), where \( \lambda_n = w_1 w_2 \cdots w_{n-1} b_n \). Consider the sequence \( ((1/\lambda_n) T^{n+1}) \). If the weights \( w_n \) are chosen to go to zero sufficiently quickly, then all matrix entries of \( (1/\lambda_n) T^{n+1} \) except for the \((1, 3)\) entry go to zero with \( n \). It follows that \( \mathcal{S} \subseteq \mathcal{W}(T) \).

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