

SOLUTION OF A PROBLEM OF PELLER CONCERNING SIMILARITY

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ABSTRACT. We answer a question of Peller by showing that for any $c > 1$ there exists a power-bounded operator T on a Hilbert space with the property that any operator S similar to T satisfies $\sup_n \|S^n\| > c$.

KEYWORDS: *Power bounded operators, similarities, multipliers, weights.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this note we answer a question due to Peller ([13]) which has also recently been raised by Pisier ([14], p. 114). Peller's question is whether, for any $\varepsilon > 0$, every power-bounded operator T is similar to an operator S with $\sup_n \|S^n\| < 1 + \varepsilon$.

It was shown by Foguel ([6]) in 1964 that there is a power-bounded operator T on a Hilbert space \mathcal{H} which is not similar to a contraction. It was later shown by Lebow that this example is not polynomially bounded ([12]); for other examples see [2] and [14], Chapter 2. Recently, Pisier ([14]) answered a problem raised by Halmos by constructing an operator which is polynomially bounded and not similar to a contraction.

We shall construct a family of counter-examples to Peller's question. These counter-examples have a rather simple structure. Let w be an A_2 -weight on the circle \mathbb{T} and let $H^2(w)$ be the closed linear span of $\{e^{in\theta} : n \geq 0\}$ in $L^2(w)$. We consider an operator

$$T\left(\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n e^{in\theta}\right) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \lambda_n a_n e^{in\theta}$$

where $(\lambda_n)_{n=0}^{\infty}$ is a monotone increasing sequence of positive reals with $\lambda_n \uparrow 1$ and $\lambda_n < 1$ with

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1 - \lambda_{n+1}}{1 - \lambda_n} = 0.$$

For such operators we can prove a rather precise result (Theorem 3.4):

$$(1.1) \quad \inf_n \{ \sup \| (A^{-1}TA)^n \| : A \text{ invertible} \} = \sec \left(\frac{\pi}{2p} \right)$$

where $p = \sup \{ a : w^a \in A_2 \}$. By taking simple choices of A_2 -weights where $p < \infty$ we can create a family of counter-examples.

The proof of Theorem 3.4 depends heavily on estimates for the norm of the Riesz projection in Section 2 particularly Theorem 2.6. These results can be obtained by a careful reading of the classical work of Helson and Szegő ([9]) on A_2 -weights (cf. [7]). However, we present a self-contained argument, in which the reader will recognize many similarities with the Helson-Szegő theory.

We also show that our examples can only be polynomially bounded in the trivial situation when w is equivalent to the constant function and then T is similar to contraction. We also note that the case $p = \infty$ in (1.1) (when Peller's conjecture holds for T) corresponds to the case when $\log w$ is in the closure of $L^\infty(\mathbb{T})$ in $BMO(\mathbb{T})$.

2. THE NORM OF THE RIESZ PROJECTION ON WEIGHTED L^2 -SPACES

We start by recalling an easy lemma concerning projections on a Hilbert space.

LEMMA 2.1. *Let E and F be closed subspaces of a Hilbert space \mathcal{H} so that $E + F$ is dense in \mathcal{H} . Suppose $0 \leq \varphi < \pi/2$. In order that there is a projection P of \mathcal{H} onto E with $F = \ker P$ with $\|P\| \leq \sec \varphi$ it is necessary and sufficient that*

$$|(e, f)| \leq \sin \varphi \|e\| \|f\|, \quad e \in E, f \in F.$$

REMARK 2.2. Note that a consequence of Lemma 2.1 is that if P is any non-trivial projection on a Hilbert space then $\|P\| = \|I - P\|$.

Now let \mathbb{T} be the unit circle (which we identify with $(-\pi, \pi]$ in the usual way) equipped with the standard Haar measure $d\theta/2\pi$. Let μ be any finite positive Borel measure on \mathbb{T} . We denote by $L^2(\mu) = L^2(\mathbb{T}; \mu)$ the corresponding weighted L^2 -space; if μ is absolutely continuous with respect to Haar measure so that $d\mu = (2\pi)^{-1}w(\theta)d\theta$ then we write $L^2(w)$. We refer to any nonnegative $w \in L^1(\mathbb{T})$ so that $w > 0$ on a set of positive measure as a weight.

Suppose w is a weight. We recall that $H^2(w)$ is the closed subspace of $L^2(w)$ generated by the functions $\{e^{in\theta} : n \geq 0\}$. We recall that w is an A_2 -weight if there is a bounded projection R of $L^2(w)$ onto $H^2(w)$ with $R(e^{in\theta}) = 0$ if $n < 0$. In this case we always have that $w > 0$ a.e., w^{-1} is an A_2 -weight and $L^2(w) \subset L^1$; the operator R must coincide with the Riesz projection $Rf \sim \sum_{n \geq 0} \hat{f}(n)e^{in\theta}$. Let

us denote by $\|R\|_w$ the norm of the Riesz projection on $L^2(w)$. Note that for an A_2 -weight $H^2(w) = H^1 \cap L^2(w)$. In particular we can define $f(z) = \sum_{n \geq 0} \hat{f}(n)z^n$

for $|z| < 1$.

The following proposition can be derived from the classical work of Helson-Szegő [9] or [7]. However, we give a self-contained direct proof. We note that it is also close to some work of Cotlar-Sadosky, see e.g. [5].

PROPOSITION 2.3. Let w be a weight function on \mathbb{T} . Assume $0 \leq \varphi < \frac{\pi}{2}$. The following conditions are equivalent:

- (i) w is an A_2 -weight and $\|R\|_w \leq \sec \varphi$;
- (ii) there exists $h \in H^1$ so that $|w - h| \leq w \sin \varphi$ a.e.

Proof. First note that by Lemma 2.1, (i) is equivalent to

$$(2.1) \quad \left| \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} f(\theta)g(\theta)w(\theta) \frac{d\theta}{2\pi} \right| \leq \sin \varphi \left(\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} |f(\theta)|^2 w(\theta) \frac{d\theta}{2\pi} \right)^{1/2} \left(\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} |g(\theta)|^2 w(\theta) \frac{d\theta}{2\pi} \right)^{1/2},$$

whenever $f, g \in H^2(w)$ with $g(0) = 0$.

To prove (i) implies (ii) we note that if w is an A_2 -weight so that $\log w \in L^1$ we can find an outer function $F \in H^2$ so that $w = |F|^2$ a.e.. Then (2.1) gives

$$\left| \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} fgwF^{-2} \frac{d\theta}{2\pi} \right| \leq \sin \varphi \left(\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} |f|^2 \frac{d\theta}{2\pi} \right)^{1/2} \left(\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} |g|^2 \frac{d\theta}{2\pi} \right)^{1/2},$$

for $f, g \in H^2$ with $g(0) = 0$. This in turn implies that

$$\left| \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} fwF^{-2} \frac{d\theta}{2\pi} \right| \leq \sin \varphi \|f\|_1$$

for all $f \in H^1$, with $f(0) = 0$. By the Hahn-Banach Theorem this implies there exists $G \in H^\infty$ so that $\|wF^{-2} - G\|_\infty \leq \sin \varphi$ or $|w - h| \leq w \sin \varphi$ where $h = F^2G \in H^1$.

For the reverse direction just note that if $f, g \in H^2(w)$ with $g(0) = 0$ then

$$\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} fgw \frac{d\theta}{2\pi} = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} fg(w - h) \frac{d\theta}{2\pi}$$

so that (2.1) follows from the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality. ■

Let us isolate a simple special case of the above proposition.

PROPOSITION 2.4. Let $0 \neq f \in H^1$ be such that $\|\arg f(\theta)\| \leq \varphi < \pi/2$ almost everywhere. If f is not identically zero then $w = \operatorname{Re} f$ is an A_2 -weight for which $\|R\|_w \leq \sec \varphi$.

Proof. In this case $w = \operatorname{Re} f \geq 0$ a.e. and $|\operatorname{Im} f| \leq w \tan \varphi$ a.e. Furthermore:

$$|w - \cos^2 \varphi f|^2 \leq (\sin^4 \varphi + \cos^4 \varphi \tan^2 \varphi)w^2 \leq w^2 \sin^2 \varphi$$

a.e., so that we obtain the result from Proposition 2.3. ■

REMARK 2.5. Suppose $0 < \alpha < 1$ and $f \in H^1$ is given by

$$f(z) = \left(\frac{z - 1}{z + 1} \right)^\alpha$$

(taking the usual branch of $\zeta \mapsto \zeta^\alpha$). Then

$$w = \operatorname{Re} f = \cos \frac{\alpha\pi}{2} \left| \tan \frac{\theta}{2} \right|^\alpha.$$

It follows that

$$(2.2) \quad \|R\|_{|\tan(\theta/2)|^\alpha} \leq \sec \frac{\alpha\pi}{2}.$$

In fact (2.2) is well-known (see [11], for example). We are grateful to Igor Verbitsky for bringing this reference to our attention.

We will say that two weights v, w are equivalent ($v \sim w$) if $v/w, w/v \in L^\infty$.

THEOREM 2.6. *Suppose w is an A_2 -weight on \mathbb{T} . Then*

$$\inf\{\|R\|_v : v \sim w\} = \sec\left(\frac{\pi}{2p}\right)$$

where

$$p = \sup\{a > 0 : w^a \in A_2\}.$$

Proof. First suppose $v \sim w$ and $\|R\|_v = \sec \psi$ where $0 \leq \psi < \pi/2$. Then there exists $h \in H^1$ with $|v - h| \leq v \sin \psi$ a.e. In particular, $|\arg h| \leq \psi$ a.e. and so h maps \mathbb{D} into the same sector. It follows that we can define $h^r \in H^{1/r}$ for all $r > 0$. Choose r so that $r\psi < \pi/2$, and let $g = h^r$. Then $\operatorname{Re} g \geq 0$ and $|\operatorname{Im} g| \leq \tan(r\psi)\operatorname{Re} g$ so that $g \in H^1$. Now by Proposition 2.4 we have that $\operatorname{Re} g$ is an A_2 -weight. However $\operatorname{Re} g \sim |h|^r \sim w^r$ so that $r \leq p$. We deduce that $\psi \geq \pi/(2p)$.

For the converse direction assume that w^r is an A_2 -weight. Then there exists $h \in H^1$ so that $|w^r - h| \leq w^r \sin \psi$ where $0 \leq \psi < \pi/2$. Arguing as above we have $g = h^{1/r} \in H^1$ and $\operatorname{Re} g$ is an A_2 -weight with $\|R\|_{\operatorname{Re} g} \leq \sec(\psi/r)$. Note that $\operatorname{Re} g \sim w$, and this establishes the other direction. ■

REMARK 2.7. If we now let $w(\theta) = |\tan \theta/2|^\alpha$ where $0 < \alpha < 1$ then we can apply (2.2) to deduce that, for this particular weight the infimum is attained, i.e.

$$(2.3) \quad \inf\{\|R\|_v : v \sim w\} = \|R\|_{|\tan(\theta/2)|^\alpha} = \sec\left(\frac{\alpha\pi}{2}\right).$$

3. MULTIPLIERS

Suppose $(e_n)_{n=0}^\infty$ be any Schauder basis of a Hilbert space \mathcal{H} ; note that we do not assume (e_n) to be orthonormal or even unconditional. Let (P_n) be the associated partial sum operators $P_n\left(\sum_{k=0}^\infty a_k e_k\right) = \sum_{k=0}^n a_k e_k$. Let $Q_n = I - P_n$ and note that $\|Q_n\| = \|P_n\|$ for all $n \geq 0$. Since (e_n) is a basis we have that $\sup_n \|P_n\| = b < \infty$ where b is the *basis constant*. We call an operator $T : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ a *monotone multiplier* (with respect to the given basis) if there is an increasing sequence $(\lambda_k)_{k=0}^\infty$ in \mathbb{R} so that $0 \leq \lambda_k \leq 1$ so that

$$T\left(\sum_{k=0}^\infty a_k e_k\right) = \sum_{k=0}^\infty \lambda_k a_k e_k.$$

LEMMA 3.1. *If T is defined as above then T is (well-defined and) bounded and $\sup_n \|T^n\| \leq b$.*

Proof. It is enough to show T is bounded and $\|T\| \leq b$ since T^n is also a monotone multiplier. To see this note that if $(a_k)_{k=0}^\infty$ is finitely nonzero and $x = \sum_{k=0}^\infty a_k e_k$, then

$$Tx = \lambda_0 x + \sum_{k=1}^\infty (\lambda_k - \lambda_{k-1}) Q_{k-1} x$$

so that $\|Tx\| \leq \sup_n \|Q_n\| = b$. ■

We shall say that T is a *fast monotone multiplier* if in addition, $\lambda_k < 1$ for all k and

$$(3.1) \quad \lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1 - \lambda_k}{1 - \lambda_{k-1}} = 0.$$

LEMMA 3.2. *Suppose T is a fast monotone multiplier. Then there is an increasing sequence of integers $(N_n)_{n=0}^\infty$ so that $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \|T^{N_n} - Q_n\| = 0$.*

Proof. Note that if $x = \sum_{k=0}^\infty a_k e_k$ then

$$T^{N_n} x - Q_n x = \sum_{k=0}^n \lambda_k^{N_n} a_k e_k - (1 - \lambda_{n+1}^{N_n}) Q_n x + \sum_{k=n+1}^\infty (\lambda_k^{N_n} - \lambda_{n+1}^{N_n}) a_k e_k$$

whence a calculation as in Lemma 3.1 gives

$$\|T^{N_n} x - Q_n x\| \leq b \lambda_n^{N_n} \|P_n x\| + (b + 1)(1 - \lambda_{n+1}^{N_n}) \|Q_n x\|.$$

It follows that

$$\|T^{N_n} - Q_n\| \leq b(b \lambda_n^{N_n} + (b + 1)(1 - \lambda_{n+1}^{N_n})).$$

It remains therefore only to select N_n so that $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \lambda_n^{N_n} = 0$ and $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \lambda_{n+1}^{N_n} = 1$.

For convenience we write $\lambda_n = e^{-\nu_n}$ where $\nu_n/\nu_{n+1} = \kappa_n^2$ and $\kappa_n \rightarrow \infty$. For any $n \geq 0$, pick N_n to be the greatest integer so that $N_n \nu_n^{1/2} \nu_{n+1}^{1/2} \leq 1$. Then

$$N_n \nu_{n+1}^{1/2} \nu_n^{1/2} \geq \frac{N_n}{N_n + 1}$$

and $\lim N_n = \infty$.

Now

$$N_n \nu_n \geq \frac{N_n \kappa_n}{N_n + 1} \quad \text{and} \quad N_n \nu_{n+1} \leq \kappa_n^{-1}.$$

This yields the desired result. ■

We now turn to the case when $\mathcal{H} = H^2(w)$ where w is an A_2 -weight and $e_k(\theta) = e^{ik\theta}$ for $k \geq 0$.

LEMMA 3.3. *The basis constant of $(e_k)_{k=0}^\infty$ in $H^2(w)$ is given by $b = \|R\|_w$.*

Proof. In fact $Q_{n-1}f = e_n R(e_{-n}f)$ so it is clear that $\|Q_{n-1}\| \leq \|R\|_w$. For the other direction suppose f is a trigonometric polynomial in $L^2(w)$. Then for large enough n we have $e_n f \in H^2(w)$ and then $Rf = e_{-n} Q_{n-1}(e_n f)$. This quickly yields $\|R\|_w \leq b$. ■

THEOREM 3.4. *Let w be an A_2 -weight on \mathbb{T} and let $T : H^2(w) \rightarrow H^2(w)$ be a fast monotone multiplier corresponding to the sequence (λ_n) . Then*

$$(3.2) \quad \inf_n \{ \sup \| (A^{-1}TA)^n \| : A \text{ invertible} \} = \sec\left(\frac{\pi}{2p}\right)$$

where

$$p = \sup\{a > 0 : w^a \in A_2\}.$$

Proof. We shall prove that if $\sigma \geq 1$ then the existence of an invertible A so that $\sup_n \| (A^{-1}TA)^n \| \leq \sigma$ is equivalent to the existence of a weight v equivalent to w so that $\|R\|_v \leq \sigma$. Once this is done, the result follows from Theorem 2.6.

In one direction this is easy. Assume v equivalent to w and $\|R\|_v \leq \sigma$. This means that there is an equivalent inner-product norm on $H^2(w)$ in which the basis constant of $(e_k)_{k=0}^\infty$ is bounded by σ . It follows from Lemma 3.1 that in this equivalent norm we have $\sup_n \|T^n\|_v \leq \sigma$. Hence T is similar to an operator $A^{-1}TA$ such that $\sup_n \| (A^{-1}TA)^n \| \leq \sigma$.

We now consider the converse. Let $S : H^2(w) \rightarrow H^2(w)$ be the operator $Sf = e_1 f$. Suppose A is an invertible operator such that $\| (A^{-1}TA)^n \| \leq \sigma$. We will define a new inner-product on $H^2(w)$ by

$$\langle f, g \rangle = \text{LIM}(A^{-1}S^n f, A^{-1}S^n g)$$

where LIM denotes any Banach limit (see e.g. [4], p. 85). Since S is an isometry on $H^2(w)$ and A is invertible this defines an equivalent inner-product $|\cdot|$ norm on $H^2(w)$. Now for any $f \in H^2(w)$ and fixed $m \in \mathbb{N}$ we have

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \|A^{-1}Q_{m+n}S^n f - A^{-1}T^{N_{m+n}}S^n f\| = 0$$

where (N_n) is given in Lemma 3.2. Hence

$$\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} (\|A^{-1}Q_{m+n}S^n f\|^2 - \sigma^2 \|A^{-1}S^n f\|^2) \leq 0.$$

Now

$$|Q_m f|^2 = \text{LIM} \|A^{-1}S^n Q_m f\|^2 = \text{LIM} \|A^{-1}Q_{m+n}S^n f\|^2 \leq \sigma^2 |f|^2.$$

Thus with respect to the new norm $|\cdot|$ the basis constant is at most σ .

Now let $c_k = \langle e_0, e_k \rangle$ for $k \geq 0$ and let $c_k = \bar{c}_{-k}$ when $k < 0$. Then it follows easily that $\langle e_k, e_l \rangle = c_{l-k}$ for all k, l and that for all finitely nonzero sequences (a_k) of complex numbers we have that

$$\sum_{k,l} a_k \bar{a}_l c_{k-l} \geq 0.$$

This implies (see [10], p. 38) that there is a finite positive measure μ on \mathbb{T} so that

$$\int e^{-ik\theta} d\mu(\theta) = c_k.$$

Thus

$$\langle f, g \rangle = \int f\bar{g} d\mu.$$

However this norm is equivalent to the original norm so that μ is absolutely continuous with respect to Lebesgue measure and of the form $(2\pi)^{-1}v(\theta)d\theta$ where $v \sim w$.

It follows that in $H^2(v)$ the basis constant of the exponential basis is at most σ and so by Lemma 3.3 we have $\|R\|_v \leq \sigma$ and the proof is complete. ■

We can now give explicit examples by taking the weights $w(\theta) = |\theta|^\alpha$ where $0 < \alpha < 1$. It is clear that in Theorem 3.4 we have $p = \alpha^{-1}$ and so for any fast monotone multiplier we have

$$\inf\{\sup_n \|(A^{-1}TA)^n\| : A \text{ invertible}\} = \sec\left(\frac{\pi\alpha}{2}\right) > 1.$$

Note that we are essentially using here the original example of a conditional basis for Hilbert space due to Babenko ([1]). We can also utilize (2.3) to show that for this example the infimum in (3.2) is actually attained. In general the infimum in (3.2) need not be attained; this it will be seen easily from Theorem 3.6 below.

THEOREM 3.5. *Let w be an A_2 -weight and suppose $T : H^2(w) \rightarrow H^2(w)$ is a fast monotone multiplier, corresponding to the sequence (λ_n) . Then the following are equivalent:*

- (i) T is similar to a contraction;
- (ii) T is polynomially bounded;
- (iii) $w \sim 1$.

Proof. That (i) implies (ii) is a consequence of von Neumann’s inequality (see [14]). Similarly, (iii) implies (i) is trivial. It therefore remains to prove that (ii) implies (iii). We shall treat the case when the λ_k are distinct; small modifications are necessary in the other cases. We shall also suppose the measure $d\mu = (2\pi)^{-1}w(\theta)d\theta$ is a probability measure so that $\|e_k\| = 1$ for all k .

First note that if $f \in H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ then for any $r < 1$, then $f_r(T)$ is well-defined where $f_r(z) = f(rz)$ and if T is polynomially bounded we have an estimate

$$\|f_r(T)\| \leq C\|f\|_{H^\infty(\mathbb{D})},$$

or equivalently

$$\left\| \sum_{k=0}^\infty f(r\lambda_k)a_k e_k \right\| \leq C\|f\|_{H^\infty(\mathbb{D})} \left\| \sum_{k=0}^\infty a_k e_k \right\|$$

whenever (a_k) is finitely non-zero. Letting $r \rightarrow 1$ we obtain

$$\left\| \sum_{k=0}^\infty f(\lambda_k)a_k e_k \right\| \leq C\|f\|_{H^\infty(\mathbb{D})} \left\| \sum_{k=0}^\infty a_k e_k \right\|.$$

Recall that by Carleson's theorem ([3]) the sequence (λ_n) is *interpolating* (cf. [7], p. 287–288) so that there is a constant B such that for any sequence $\varepsilon_k = \pm 1$ there exists $f \in H^\infty(\mathbb{D})$ with $\|f\|_{H^\infty(\mathbb{D})} \leq B$ and $f(\lambda_k) = \varepsilon_k$ for all $k \geq 0$. Hence

$$\left\| \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \varepsilon_k a_k e_k \right\| \leq BC \left\| \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} a_k e_k \right\|$$

for all finitely non-zero sequences (a_k) . Hence by the parallelogram law we have

$$(BC)^{-1} \left(\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} |a_k|^2 \right)^{1/2} \leq \left\| \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} a_k e_k \right\| \leq BC \left(\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} |a_k|^2 \right)^{1/2}$$

from which it follows that $w \sim 1$. ■

We conclude by considering the cases when

$$\inf_n \{ \sup \| (A^{-1}TA)^n \| : A \text{ invertible} \} = 1.$$

THEOREM 3.6. *Let w be an A_2 -weight and suppose $T : H^2(w) \rightarrow H^2(w)$ is a fast monotone multiplier, corresponding to the sequence (λ_n) . Then the following are equivalent:*

- (i) for any $\varepsilon > 0$, T is similar to an operator S with $\sup_n \|S^n\| < 1 + \varepsilon$;
- (ii) $\log w$ is in the closure of L^∞ in BMO;
- (iii) $w^a \in A_2$ for every $a > 0$.

Proof. The equivalence of (i) and (iii) is proved in Theorem 3.4. The equivalence of (ii) and (iii) is due to Garnett and Jones ([8]); see also [7], Corollary 6.6 and its proof (p. 258–9). ■

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