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A NOTE ON HYPONORMAL OPERATORS

STERLING K. BERBERIAN

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The last exercise in reference [4] is a question to which I did not know the answer: does there exist a hyponormal ($TT^* \leq T^*T$) completely continuous operator which is not normal? Recently Tsuyoshi Andô has answered this question in the negative, by proving that every hyponormal completely continuous operator is necessarily normal ([1]). The key to Andô's solution is a direct calculation with vectors, showing that a hyponormal operator T satisfies the relation $\|T^n\| = \|T\|^n$ for every positive integer n (for "subnormal" operators, this was observed by P. R. Halmos on page 196 of [6]). It then follows, from Gelfand's formula for spectral radius, that the spectrum of T contains a scalar μ such that $|\mu| = \|T\|$ (see [9], Theorem 1.6.3.).

The purpose of the present note is to obtain this result from another direction, via the technique of approximate proper vectors ([3]); in this approach, the nonemptiness of the spectrum of a hyponormal operator T is made to depend on the elementary case of a self-adjoint operator, and a simple calculation with proper vectors leads to a scalar μ in the spectrum of T such that $|\mu| = \|T\|$. This is the Theorem below, and its Corollaries 1 and 2 are due also to Andô. In the remaining corollaries, we note several applications to completely continuous operators.

We consider operators (=continuous linear mappings) defined in a Hilbert space. As in [3], the spectrum of an operator T is denoted $s(T)$, and the approximate point spectrum is $a(T)$. We note for future use that every boundary point of $s(T)$ belongs to $a(T)$; see, for example, ([4], hint to Exercise VIII. 3.4).

LEMMA 1. *Suppose T is a hyponormal operator, with $\|T\| \leq 1$, and let \mathcal{M} be the set of all vectors which are fixed under the operator TT^* . Then,*

- (i) \mathcal{M} is a closed linear subspace,
- (ii) the vectors in \mathcal{M} are fixed under T^*T ,
- (iii) \mathcal{M} is invariant under T , and
- (iv) the restriction of T to \mathcal{M} is an isometric operator in \mathcal{M} .

Proof. Since $\mathcal{M} = \{x : TT^*x = x\}$ is the null space of $I - TT^*$, it is a closed linear subspace. The relation $TT^* \leq T^*T \leq I$ implies $0 \leq I - T^*T \leq I - TT^*$, and from this it is clear that the null space of $I - TT^*$ is contained in the null space of $I - T^*T$. That is, $TT^*x = x$

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implies $T^*Tx = x$. This proves (ii). (Alternatively, given $TT^*x = x$, one can calculate directly that $\|T^*Tx - x\|^2 \leq 0$.) If $x \in \mathcal{M}$, that is if $TT^*x = x$, then the calculation $TT^*(Tx) = T(T^*Tx) = Tx$ shows that $Tx \in \mathcal{M}$; moreover, $\|Tx\|^2 = (T^*Tx|x) = \|x\|^2$.

LEMMA 2. *Every isometric operator has an approximate proper value of absolute value 1.*

Proof. Let U be an isometric operator in a nonzero Hilbert space. Suppose first that the spectrum of U contains 1; since $\|U\| = 1$, it follows that 1 is a boundary point of $s(U)$ (see [4], part (ix) of Exercise VII. 3. 12), hence 1 is an approximate proper value for U .

If the spectrum of U does not contain 1, that is if $I - U$ is invertible, we may form the Cayley transform A of U ; thus,

$$A = i(I + U)(I - U)^{-1} = i(I - U)^{-1}(I + U).$$

Using the hypothesis $U^*U = I$, let us show that A is self-adjoint. Left-multiplying the relation $(I - U)A = i(I + U)$ by U^* , we have $(U^* - I)A = i(U^* + I)$, thus $(I - U)^*A = -i(I + U)^*$. Since $(I - U)^*$ is invertible, with inverse $[(I - U)^{-1}]^*$, we have

$$A = -i[(I - U)^{-1}]^*(I + U)^* = -i[(I + U)(I - U)^{-1}]^* = A^*.$$

It follows that the operators $A + iI$ and $A - iI$ are invertible, and solving the relation $(I - U)A = i(I + U)$ for U , we have

$$U = (A - iI)(A + iI)^{-1} = (A + iI)^{-1}(A - iI).$$

Incidentally, since U is the product of invertible operators, we conclude that U is unitary.

Since A is self-adjoint, we know from an elementary argument that the approximate point spectrum of A is non empty ([7], Theorem 34.2). Let $\alpha \in \alpha(A)$, and let x_n be a sequence of unit vectors such that $\|Ax_n - \alpha x_n\| \rightarrow 0$. Define $\mu = (\alpha + i)^{-1}(\alpha - i)$; since α is real, μ has absolute value 1. It will suffice to show that μ is an approximate proper value for U ; indeed, $\|(U - \mu I)x_n\| \rightarrow 0$ results from the calculation

$$\begin{aligned} U - \mu I &= (A + iI)^{-1}(A - iI) - (\alpha + i)^{-1}(\alpha - i)I \\ &= (\alpha + i)^{-1}(A + iI)^{-1}[(\alpha + i)(A - iI) - (\alpha - i)(A + iI)] \\ &= 2i(\alpha + i)^{-1}(A + iI)^{-1}(A - \alpha I), \end{aligned}$$

the fact that $\|(A - \alpha I)x_n\| \rightarrow 0$, and the continuity of the operator $2i(\alpha + i)^{-1}(A + iI)^{-1}$.

Incidentally, if U is an isometric operator such that the spectrum of U excludes some complex number μ of absolute value 1, then $\mu^{-1}U$

is an isometric operator whose spectrum excludes 1. The proof of Lemma 2 then shows that $\mu^{-1}U$ is unitary, hence so is U . In other words: the spectrum of a nonnormal isometry must include the unit circle $|\mu| = 1$; indeed, Putnam has shown that the spectrum is the unit disc $|\mu| \leq 1$ ([8], Corollary 1). The latter result is also an immediate consequence of ([5], Lemma 2.1), and the fact that the spectrum of an unilateral shift operator is the unit disc.

THEOREM. (Andô) *Every hyponormal operator T has an approximate proper value μ such that $|\mu| = \|T\|$.*

Proof. We may assume $\|T\| = 1$ without loss of generality. Since $TT^* \geq 0$ and $\|TT^*\| = 1$, we know that 1 is an approximate proper value for TT^* . Since the property of hyponormality is preserved under *-isomorphism, we may assume, after a change of Hilbert space, that 1 is a proper value for TT^* ([3], Theorem 1). Form the nonzero closed linear subspace $\mathcal{M} = \{x : TT^*x = x\}$; according to Lemma 1, \mathcal{M} is invariant under T , and the restriction of T to \mathcal{M} is an isometric operator U in the Hilbert space \mathcal{M} . By Lemma 2, U has an approximate proper value μ of absolute value 1. Let x_n be any sequence of unit vectors in \mathcal{M} such that $\|Ux_n - \mu x_n\| \rightarrow 0$. Since $Ux_n = Tx_n$, obviously μ is an approximate proper value for T , and $|\mu| = 1 = \|T\|$.

COROLLARY 1. *A generalized nilpotent hyponormal operator is necessarily zero.*

Proof. If T is hyponormal, then $s(T)$ contains a scalar μ such that $|\mu| = \|T\|$. For every positive integer n , it follows that $s(T^n)$ contains μ^n (see [7], Theorem 33.1); then $\|T\|^n = |\mu|^n = |\mu^n| \leq \|T^n\| \leq \|T\|^n$, and so $\|T^n\| = \|T\|^n$. If moreover T is a generalized nilpotent, that is if $\lim \|T^n\|^{1/n} = 0$, then $\|T\| = 0$.

COROLLARY 2. *If T is a completely continuous hyponormal operator, then T is normal.*

Proof. The proof to be given is essentially the same as Andô's. The proper subspaces of T are mutually orthogonal, and reduce T ([4], Exercise VII. 2.5). Let \mathcal{M} be the smallest closed linear subspace which contains every proper subspace of T , and let $\mathcal{N} = \mathcal{M}^\perp$; clearly \mathcal{N} reduces T , and the restriction $T|_{\mathcal{N}}$ is a completely continuous hyponormal operator in \mathcal{N} ([4], Exercise VI. 9.18). If the spectrum of $T|_{\mathcal{N}}$ were different from $\{0\}$, it would have a nonzero boundary point μ , hence μ would be a proper value for $T|_{\mathcal{N}}$ (see [4], Theorem VIII. 3.2); this is impossible since $\mathcal{N}^\perp = \mathcal{M}$ already contains every proper vector for T .

We conclude from the Theorem that $T|_{\mathcal{N}} = 0$, and this forces $\mathcal{N} = \{0\}$ (recall that \mathcal{N}^\perp contains the null space of T). Thus, the proper subspaces of T are a total family, hence T is normal by ([4], Exercise VII. 2.5).

Suppose T is a normal operator whose spectrum (a) has empty interior, and (b) does not separate the complex plane. Wermer has shown that the invariant subspaces of T reduce T ([10], Theorem 7). It is well known that the conditions (a) and (b) are fulfilled by the spectrum of any completely continuous operator. In particular: if T is a completely continuous normal operator, then every invariant subspace of T reduces T . A more elementary proof of this may be based on Corollary 2:

COROLLARY 3. *If T is a completely continuous normal operator, and \mathcal{N} is a closed linear subspace invariant under T , then \mathcal{N} reduces T .*

Proof. Indeed, it suffices to assume that T is hyponormal and \mathcal{N} is an invariant subspace such that $T|_{\mathcal{N}}$ is completely continuous. Since $T|_{\mathcal{N}}$ is hyponormal ([4], Exercise VI. 9.10), it follows from Corollary 2 that $T|_{\mathcal{N}}$ is normal, hence \mathcal{N} reduces T by ([4], Exercise VI. 9.9).

Quoting ([4], Theorem VII. 3.1), we have:

COROLLARY 4. *If T is a hyponormal operator, then*

$$\|T\| = LUB\{|(Tx|x)| : \|x\| \leq 1\}.$$

Incidentally, if T is hyponormal, it is clear from Corollary 4 that $\|T^*\| = LUB\{|(T^*x|x)| : \|x\| \leq 1\}$.

COROLLARY 5. *If the completely continuous operator T is semi-normal in the sense of [8], then T is normal.*

Proof. The definition of semi-normality is that either $TT^* \leq T^*T$ or $TT^* \geq T^*T$, in other words, either T or T^* is hyponormal; since both are completely continuous (see [4], Exercise VIII. 1.6), our assertion follows from Corollary 2.

Let us say that an operator T is *nearly normal* in case T commutes with T^*T . The structure of nearly normal operators has been determined by Brown, and it is a consequence of his results that a completely continuous nearly normal operator is in fact normal (see the concluding remarks in [5]). This may also be proved as follows. An elementary calculation with square roots shows that a nearly normal operator is hyponormal (see [2], proof of Corollary 1 of Theorem 8); assuming also complete continuity and citing Corollary 2, we have:

COROLLARY 6. *If T is a completely continuous nearly normal operator, then T is normal.*

Finally,

COROLLARY 7. *If $S = T + \lambda I$, where T is a completely continuous operator, and if S is hyponormal, then S is normal.*

Proof. Since S is hyponormal, so is T ([4], hint to Exercise VII. 1.6), hence T is normal by Corollary 2; therefore S is normal. So to speak, the C^* -algebra of all operators of the form $T + \lambda I$, with T completely continuous, is of "finite class".

We close with an elementary remark about the adjoint of a hyponormal operator: if T is hyponormal, then $s(T^*) = a(T^*)$. For, suppose λ does not belong to $a(T^*)$, and let $\mu = \lambda^*$. Then, $(T - \mu I)^* = T^* - \lambda I$ is bounded below ([4], Exercise VII. 3.8), and since $T - \mu I$ is also hyponormal, the relation $(T - \mu I)(T - \mu I)^* \leq (T - \mu I)^*(T - \mu I)$ shows that $T - \mu I$ is also bounded below. Then $T - \mu I$ is invertible ([4], Exercise VI. 8.11), hence so is $T^* - \lambda I$, thus λ does not belong to $s(T^*)$.

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Pacific Journal of Mathematics

Vol. 12, No. 4

April, 1962

Tsuyoshi Andô, <i>On fundamental properties of a Banach space with a cone</i>	1163
Sterling K. Berberian, <i>A note on hyponormal operators</i>	1171
Errett Albert Bishop, <i>Analytic functions with values in a Frechet space</i>	1177
(Sherman) Elwood Bohn, <i>Equicontinuity of solutions of a quasi-linear equation</i>	1193
Andrew Michael Bruckner and E. Ostrow, <i>Some function classes related to the class of convex functions</i>	1203
J. H. Curtiss, <i>Limits and bounds for divided differences on a Jordan curve in the complex domain</i>	1217
P. H. Doyle, III and John Gilbert Hocking, <i>Dimensional invertibility</i>	1235
David G. Feingold and Richard Steven Varga, <i>Block diagonally dominant matrices and generalizations of the Gerschgorin circle theorem</i>	1241
Leonard Dubois Fountain and Lloyd Kenneth Jackson, <i>A generalized solution of the boundary value problem for $y'' = f(x, y, y')$</i>	1251
Robert William Gilmer, Jr., <i>Rings in which semi-primary ideals are primary</i>	1273
Ruth Goodman, <i>K-polar polynomials</i>	1277
Israel Halperin and Maria Wonenburger, <i>On the additivity of lattice completeness</i>	1289
Robert Winship Heath, <i>Arc-wise connectedness in semi-metric spaces</i>	1301
Isidore Heller and Alan Jerome Hoffman, <i>On unimodular matrices</i>	1321
Robert G. Heyneman, <i>Duality in general ergodic theory</i>	1329
Charles Ray Hobby, <i>Abelian subgroups of p-groups</i>	1343
Kenneth Myron Hoffman and Hugo Rossi, <i>The minimum boundary for an analytic polyhedron</i>	1347
Adam Koranyi, <i>The Bergman kernel function for tubes over convex cones</i>	1355
Pesi Rustom Masani and Jack Max Robertson, <i>The time-domain analysis of a continuous parameter weakly stationary stochastic process</i>	1361
William Schumacher Massey, <i>Non-existence of almost-complex structures on quaternionic projective spaces</i>	1379
Deane Montgomery and Chung-Tao Yang, <i>A theorem on the action of SO(3)</i>	1385
Ronald John Nunke, <i>A note on Abelian group extensions</i>	1401
Carl Mark Pearcy, <i>A complete set of unitary invariants for operators generating finite W^*-algebras of type I</i>	1405
Edward C. Posner, <i>Integral closure of rings of solutions of linear differential equations</i>	1417
Duane Sather, <i>Asymptotics. III. Stationary phase for two parameters with an application to Bessel functions</i>	1423
J. Ślaskowska, <i>Bounds of analytic functions of two complex variables in domains with the Bergman-Shilov boundary</i>	1435
Joseph Gail Stampfli, <i>Hyponormal operators</i>	1453
George Gustave Weill, <i>Some extremal properties of linear combinations of kernels on Riemann surfaces</i>	1459
Edward Takashi Kobayashi, <i>Errata: "A remark on the Nijenhuis tensor"</i>	1467