

A Remark on the Dixmier Conjecture

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Abstract. The Dixmier Conjecture says that every endomorphism of the (first) Weyl algebra A_1 (over a field of characteristic zero) is an automorphism, *i.e.*, if PQ - QP = 1 for some $P, Q \in A_1$, then $A_1 = K\langle P, Q \rangle$. The Weyl algebra A_1 is a \mathbb{Z} -graded algebra. We prove that the Dixmier Conjecture holds if the elements P and Q are sums of no more than two homogeneous elements of A_1 (there is no restriction on the total degrees of P and Q).

1 Introduction

In this paper, *K* is a field of characteristic zero and $K^* := K \setminus \{0\}$. The algebra $A_1 := K\langle X, Y \mid [Y, X] = 1\rangle$ is called the *first Weyl algebra* where [Y, X] = YX - XY. The *n*-th tensor power of A_1 ,

$$A_n := A_1^{\otimes n} = \underbrace{A_1 \otimes \cdots \otimes A_1}_{n \text{ times}},$$

is called the *n*-th Weyl algebra. The algebra A_n is a simple Noetherian domain of Gel'fand–Kirillov dimension $GK(A_n) = 2n$; it is canonically isomorphic to the algebra of polynomial differential operators $K(X_1, \ldots, X_n, \partial_1, \ldots, \partial_n)$ (where $\partial_i = \frac{\partial}{\partial X_i}$) via $X_i \mapsto X_i$, $Y_i \mapsto \partial_i$ for $i = 1, \ldots, n$.

In his seminal paper, Dixmier [9] found explicit generators for the group $G = \text{Aut}_K(A_1)$ of *K*-automorphisms of the Weyl algebra A_1 . Namely, the group *G* is generated by the obvious automorphisms:

$$(X, Y) \longmapsto (X, Y + \lambda X^n), \quad (X, Y) \longmapsto (X + \lambda Y^n, Y), \quad (X, Y) \longmapsto (\mu X, \mu^{-1}Y),$$

where $\lambda \in K$, $\mu \in K^*$, and $n \in \mathbb{N}_+ := \{1, 2, \ldots\}$.

In [9], Dixmier posed six problems. The first problem of Dixmier (in the list) asks if *every endomorphism of the Weyl algebra* A_1 *is an automorphism*, i.e., given elements P, Q of A such that [P, Q] = 1, do they generate the algebra A_1 ? A similar problem, but for the *n*-th Weyl algebra, is called the *Dixmier Conjecture*. Problems three and six have been solved by Joseph [10], Problem four (in the case of homogeneous elements) and Problem five have been solved by Bavula [4].

The Dixmier Conjecture implies the Jacobian Conjecture [2], and the inverse implication is also true [8, 11]; a short proof is given in [6]; see also [1].

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In [5], it was shown that for each *K*-endomorphism $\phi: A_n \to A_n$, its image is very large, *i.e.*, the left A_{2n} -module ${}^{\phi}A_n{}^{\phi}$ is a holonomic A_{2n} -module, where for all a, $b \in A_n$ and $c \in {}^{\phi}A_n{}^{\phi}$, $a \cdot c \cdot b := \phi(a)c\phi(b)$. In particular, it has finite length with simple holonomic factors over A_{2n} (see [5] for details). To prove that the Dixmier Conjecture holds for the Weyl algebra A_n , it remains to show that the length is 1. Note that the Gel'fand–Kirillov dimension of a simple A_{2n} -module can be $2n, 2n+1, \ldots, 4n-1$, and the last case is the generic case.

It was also shown [7] that every algebra endomorphism of the algebra $\mathbb{I}_1 = K\langle x, \partial, f \rangle$ of polynomial integro-differential operators is an automorphism and it was conjectured that the same result holds for

$$\mathbb{I}_n := \mathbb{I}_1^{\otimes n} = K \Big(x_1, \dots, x_n, \partial_1, \dots, \partial_n, \int_1, \dots, \int_n \Big)$$

The Weyl algebra $A_1 = \bigoplus_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} A_{1,i}$ is a \mathbb{Z} -graded algebra $(A_{1,i}A_{1,j} \subseteq A_{1,i+j}$ for all i, $j \in \mathbb{Z}$) where $A_{1,0} = K[H]$, H = YX, and, for $i \ge 1$, $A_{1,i} = K[H]X^i$ and $A_{1,-i} = K[H]Y^i$. For a nonzero element a of A_1 , the number of *nonzero homogeneous* components is called the *mass* of a, denoted by m(a). For example, $m(\alpha X^i) = 1$ for all $\alpha \in K[H] \setminus \{0\}$ and $i \ge 1$. The aim of this paper is to prove the following theorem.

Theorem 1.1 Let P, Q be elements of the first Weyl algebra A_1 with $m(P) \le 2$ and $m(Q) \le 2$. If [P,Q] = 1, then $P = \tau(Y)$ and $Q = \tau(X)$ for some automorphism $\tau \in \operatorname{Aut}_K(A_1)$.

2 Proof of Theorem 1.1

The Weyl algebra is a generalized Weyl algebra. Let *D* be a ring with an automorphism σ and a central element *a*. The generalized Weyl algebra $A = D(\sigma, a)$ of degree 1, is the ring generated by *D* and two indeterminates *X* and *Y* subject to the relations [3]

$$X\alpha = \sigma(\alpha)X$$
 and $Y\alpha = \sigma^{-1}(\alpha)Y$, for all $\alpha \in D$, $YX = a$, and $XY = \sigma(a)$.

The algebra $A = \bigoplus_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} A_n$ is a \mathbb{Z} -graded algebra, where $A_n = Dv_n$, $v_n = X^n$ (n > 0), $v_n = Y^{-n}$ (n < 0), $v_0 = 1$. It follows from the defining relations that $v_n v_m = (n, m)v_{n+m} = v_{n+m} < n$, m >, for some elements

$$(n,m) = \sigma^{-n-m}(\langle n,m \rangle) \in D.$$

If n > 0 and m > 0, then

$$n \ge m : (n, -m) = \sigma^{n}(a) \cdots \sigma^{n-m+1}(a), \quad (-n, m) = \sigma^{-n+1}(a) \cdots \sigma^{-n+m}(a),$$

$$n \le m : (n, -m) = \sigma^{n}(a) \cdots \sigma(a), \quad (-n, m) = \sigma^{-n+1}(a) \cdots a.$$

In other cases (n, m) = 1.

Let K[H] be a polynomial ring in a variable H over the field K, $\sigma: H \to H - 1$ be the K-automorphism of the algebra K[H], and a = H. The first Weyl algebra $A_1 = K\langle X, Y | YX - XY = 1 \rangle$ is isomorphic to the generalized Weyl algebra $A_1 \simeq$ $K[H](\sigma, H), X \mapsto X, Y \mapsto Y, YX \mapsto H$. We identify both these algebras via this isomorphism, that is, $A_1 = K[H](\sigma, H)$ and H = YX. If n > 0 and m > 0, then

$$n \ge m : (n, -m) = (H - n) \cdots (H - n + m - 1),$$

$$(-n, m) = (H + n - 1) \cdots (H + n - m),$$

$$n \le m : (n, -m) = (H - n) \cdots (H - 1),$$

$$(-n, m) = (H + n - 1) \cdots H.$$

In other cases (n, m) = 1.

The localization $B = S^{-1}A_1$ of the Weyl algebra A_1 at the Ore subset $S = K[H] \setminus \{0\}$ of A_1 is the *skew Laurent polynomial ring* $B = K(H)[X, X^{-1}; \sigma]$ with coefficients from the field $K(H) = S^{-1}K[H]$ of rational functions, where $\sigma \in \operatorname{Aut}_K K(H)$, and $\sigma(H) =$ H - 1. The map $A_1 \rightarrow B$, $a \mapsto a/1$ is an algebra monomorphism. We identify the algebra A_1 with its image in the algebra B via $A_1 \rightarrow B$, $X \mapsto X$, $Y \mapsto HX^{-1}$. The algebra $B = \bigoplus_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} B_i$ is a \mathbb{Z} -graded algebra, where $B_i = K(H)X^i$. The algebra A_1 is a \mathbb{Z} -graded subalgebra of B.

A polynomial $f(H) = \lambda_n H^n + \lambda_{n-1} H^{n-1} + \dots + \lambda_0 \in K[H]$ of degree *n* is called a *monic polynomial* if the leading coefficient λ_n of f(H) is 1. A rational function $h \in K(H)$ is called a *monic rational function* if h = f/g for some monic polynomials f, g. A homogeneous element $u = \alpha x^n$ of *B* is called *monic* if α is a monic rational function. We can extend the concept of degree of polynomial to the field of rational functions by the rule deg $h = \deg f - \deg g$, where $h = f/g \in K[H]$. If $h_1, h_2 \in K(H)$, then deg $h_1h_2 = \deg h_1 + \deg h_2$ and deg $(h_1 + h_2) \leq \max\{\deg h_1, \deg h_2\}$. We denote by sign(*n*) and by |n| the *sign* and the *absolute value* of $n \in \mathbb{Z}$, respectively.

Let *A* be an algebra and $a \in A$. The subalgebra of *A*,

$$C_A(a) = \{b \in A \mid ab = ba\},\$$

is called the *centralizer* of the element *a* in *A*.

Proposition 2.1 (Centralizer of a Homogeneous Element of the Algebra *B*) [4, Proposition 2.1]

(i) Let $u = \alpha X^n$ be a monic element of B_n with $n \neq 0$. Then the centralizer $C_B(u) = K[v, v^{-1}]$ is a Laurent polynomial ring for a unique element $v = \beta X^{\text{sign}(n)s}$, where *s* is the least positive divisor of *n* for which there exists an element $\beta = \beta_s \in K(H)$, necessarily monic and uniquely defined, such that

$$\beta \sigma^{s}(\beta) \sigma^{2s}(\beta) \cdots \sigma^{(n/s-1)s}(\beta) = \alpha \quad \text{if } n > 0,$$

$$\beta \sigma^{-s}(\beta) \sigma^{-2s}(\beta) \cdots \sigma^{-(|n|/s-1)s}(\beta) = \alpha \quad \text{if } n < 0.$$

(ii) Let $u \in K(H) \setminus K$. Then $C_B(u) = K(H)$.

Let $A_{1,+} := K[H][X; \sigma]$ and $A_{1,-} := K[H][Y; \sigma^{-1}]$. The algebras $A_{1,+}$ and $A_{1,-}$ are (skew polynomial) subalgebras of A_1 .

Lemma 2.2 ([4]) *If* $u \in A_{1,\pm} \setminus \{0\}$ *, then* $C_A(u) \subseteq A_{1,\pm}$ *.*

The *K*-automorphism of the Weyl algebra A_1 ,

 $\xi : A_1 \longrightarrow A_1, \quad X \longmapsto Y, \quad Y \longmapsto -X,$

reverses the \mathbb{Z} -grading of the Weyl algebra A_1 , that is,

(2.1)
$$\xi(A_{1,i}) = A_{1,-i} \quad \text{for all } z \in \mathbb{Z}$$

By the *degree* of an element of A_1 we mean its total degree with respect to the canonical generators X and Y of A_1 . Let $A_{1,\leq i} := \{p \in A \mid \deg(p) \leq i\}$ for $i \in \mathbb{N}$. Then $\{A_{1,\leq i}\}_{i\in\mathbb{N}}$ is the standard filtration of the algebra A_1 associated with the generators X and Y. For all $i \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}$ and $f \in K[H] \setminus K$,

(2.2)
$$\deg \sigma'(f) = \deg f \text{ and } \deg(1 - \sigma')(f) = \deg f - 1$$

Proof of Theorem 1.1 Case 1. If $P, Q \in A_{1,\leq 1}$, then $P = \tau(Y)$ and $Q = \tau(X)$ for some $\tau \in Aut_K(A_1)$. Clearly, $P = aY + bX + \lambda$ and $Q = cY + dX + \mu$ for some $a, b, c, d, \lambda, \mu \in K$. Then 1 = [P, Q] = ad - bc. So the automorphism τ can be chosen of the form $\tau(Y) = aY + bX + \lambda$ and $\tau(X) = cY + dX + \mu$.

So, until the end of the proof we assume that at least one of the polynomials *P* or *Q* does not belong to the space $A_{1,\leq 1}$. In view of the relation 1 = [P, Q] = [-Q, P], we can assume that $P \notin A_{1,\leq 1}$. In view of (2.1), we can assume that the highest homogeneous part of *P*, say $P_p \in A_{1,p}$, satisfies the condition that $p \geq 2$. Since $m(P) \leq 2$, either $P = P_p$ (if m(P) = 1) or $P = P_r + P_p$ for some nonzero $P_r \in A_{1,r}$, where r < p.

Case 2. $(m(P), m(Q)) \neq (1, 1)$. Suppose that m(P) = m(Q) = 1. We seek a contradiction. Then $P = \alpha X^p$ and $Q = \beta Y^p$ for some nonzero polynomials $\alpha, \beta \in K[H]$. Then

$$1 = [P, Q] = \alpha \sigma^{p}(\beta)(p, -p) - \beta \sigma^{-p}(\alpha)(-p, p)$$
$$= \alpha \sigma^{p}(\beta)(p, -p) - \beta \sigma^{-p}(\alpha) \sigma^{-p}((p, -p))$$
$$= (1 - \sigma^{-p})(\alpha \sigma^{p}(\beta)(p, -p)).$$

Since $p \ge 2$ (or $P \notin A_{1,\le 1}$),

$$0 = \deg 1 = \deg(1 - \sigma^{-p})(\alpha \sigma^{p}(\beta)(p, -p)) = \deg \alpha + \deg \beta + \deg(p, -p) - 1$$

 $(by (2.2)) \ge 0 + 0 + p - 1 \ge 2 - 1 = 1$, a contradiction.

Case 3. $(m(P), m(Q)) \neq (1, 2)$. Suppose that m(P) = 1 and m(Q) = 2. Then $P = \alpha X^p$ for some $p \ge 2$ and $Q = Q_s + Q_q$, where $Q_s \in A_{1,s}$, $Q_q \in A_{1,q}$, and s < q. By Lemma 2.2, the equality [P, Q] = 1 implies that $[P, Q_s] = 1$ and $[P, Q_q] = 0$. By Case 2, this is not possible.

Case 4. Suppose that m(P) = 2 and m(Q) = 1. Then $P = P_r + P_p$ and $Q = Q_q$. By Lemma 2.2, the equality [P, Q] = 1 implies that $[P_p, Q_q] = 0$ and $[P_r, Q_q] = 1$. Then $q \ge 0$, by Lemma 2.2. The case q = 0 is not possible since then both $P_r, Q_q \in K[H]$ and this would contradict the equality $[P_r, Q_q] = 1$. Therefore, q > 0. Then $P_r = \beta Y^q$ and $Q_q = \alpha X^q$ for some nonzero elements $\beta, \alpha \in K[H]$. Then $-1 = [Q_q, P_r] = (1 - \sigma^{-q})$ $(\alpha \sigma^p(\beta)(q, -q))$ implies that

$$0 = \deg(-1) = \deg(1 - \sigma^{-q})(\alpha \sigma^{p}(\beta)(q, -q)) = \deg \alpha + \deg \beta + q - 1$$

by (2.2). Hence, q = 1, $\alpha, \beta \in K^*$, and $\beta = -\alpha^{-1}$. Then $P, Q \in A_{1,\leq 1}$, and, by Case 1, the pair (P, Q) is obtained from the pair (Y, X) by applying an automorphism of A_1 .

Case 5. $(m(P), m(Q)) \neq (2, 2)$. Since m(P) = m(Q) = 2, we can write $P = P_r + P_p$ and $Q = Q_s + Q_q$ as sums of homogeneous elements, where r < p, $P_r \in A_{1,r}$, $P_p \in A_{1,p}$, and s < q, $Q_s \in A_{1,s}$, $Q_q \in A_{1,q}$. The equality [P, Q] = 1 implies that $[P_r, Q_s] = 0$ and $[P_p, Q_q] = 0$; see Lemma 2.2. By the same Lemma, the elements *r* and *s* have the same sign, *i.e.*, either r < 0, s < 0 or r = s = 0 or r > 0, s > 0, and also the elements *p* and *q* have the same sign. Since $p \ge 2$, we must have q > 0.

Suppose that $r \ge 0$, we seek a contradiction. Then $s \ge 0$ and so the elements *P* and *Q* are elements of the subring $A_{1,+} = \bigoplus_{i\ge 0} K[H]X^i$. Now

$$K[H] \ni 1 = [P, Q] \in [A_{1,+}, A_{1,+}] \subseteq \bigoplus_{i \ge 1} K[H] X^i,$$

a contradiction. Therefore, r < 0 and s < 0.

The equality $1 = [P, Q] = [P_r, Q_q] + [P_p, Q_s]$ and Lemma 2.2 imply that r+q = 0 and p + s = 0, that is, r = -q and s = -p. So $P = P_{-q} + P_p$ and $Q = Q_{-p} + Q_q$. The elements P_p and P_{-q} are homogeneous elements of the Weyl algebra A_1 . The Weyl algebra A_1 is a homogeneous subalgebra of the algebra $K(H)[X, X^{-1}; \sigma] = K(H)[Y, Y^{-1}; \sigma^{-1}]$, where K(H) is the field of rational functions in the variable H and the automorphism σ of K(H) is given by the rule $\sigma(H) = H - 1$. By [4, Proposition 2.1(1)], the centralizer $C_B(P_p)$ of the element P_p in B is a Laurent polynomial algebra

$$K[\alpha X^n, (\alpha X^n)^{-1}]$$

for some nonzero element $\alpha \in K(H)$ and $n \ge 1$. In general, $\alpha \notin K[H]$. Similarly, $C_B(P_{-q}) = K[\beta Y^m, (\beta Y^m)^{-1}]$, for some nonzero element $\beta \in K(H)$ and $m \ge 1$. Since $[P_p, Q_q] = 0$, $Q_q \in C_B(P_p)$, and

$$P_p = \lambda(P_p)(\alpha X^n)^i = \lambda(P_p)\alpha\sigma^n(\alpha)\cdots\sigma^{n(i-1)}(\alpha)X^{ni} = \alpha_{n,i}X^p,$$

$$Q_q = \lambda(Q_q)(\alpha X^n)^j = \lambda(Q_q)\alpha\sigma^n(\alpha)\cdots\sigma^{n(j-1)}(\alpha)X^{nj} = \alpha'_{n,j}X^q,$$

for some nonzero scalars $\lambda(P_p)$, $\lambda(Q_q) \in K^*$ and some $i \ge 1$ and $j \ge 1$, where,

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_{n,i} &= \lambda(P_p) \alpha \sigma^n(\alpha) \cdots \sigma^{n(i-1)}(\alpha) \in K[H], \quad p = ni, \\ \alpha'_{n,j} &= \lambda(Q_q) \alpha \sigma^n(\alpha) \cdots \sigma^{n(j-1)}(\alpha) \in K[H], \quad q = nj. \end{aligned}$$

Since $[P_{-p}, Q_{-p}] = 0, Q_{-p} \in C_B(P_{-q})$, and

$$P_{-q} = \lambda(P_{-q})(\beta Y^m)^s = \lambda(P_{-q})\beta\sigma^{-m}(\beta)\cdots\sigma^{-m(s-1)}(\beta)Y^{ms} = \beta_{m,s}Y^p,$$

$$Q_{-p} = \lambda(Q_{-p})(\beta Y^m)^t = \lambda(Q_{-p})\beta\sigma^{-m}(\beta)\cdots\sigma^{-m(t-1)}(\beta)Y^{mt} = \beta'_{m,t}Y^q,$$

for some nonzero scalars $\lambda(P_{-q})$, $\lambda(Q_{-p}) \in K^*$ and some $s \ge 1$ and $t \ge 1$, where,

$$\beta_{m,s} = \lambda(P_{-q})\beta\sigma^{-m}(\beta)\cdots\sigma^{-m(s-1)}(\beta) \in K[H], \ p = ms,$$

$$\beta'_{m,t} = \lambda(Q_{-p})\beta\sigma^{-m}(\beta)\cdots\sigma^{-m(t-1)}(\beta) \in K[H], \ q = mt.$$

Now

$$1 = [P, Q] = [P_p, Q_{-p}] + [P_{-q}, Q_q] = [\alpha_{n,i} X^p, \beta'_{m,t} Y^p] + [\beta_{m,s} Y^q, \alpha'_{n,j} X^q]$$

= $\alpha_{n,i} \sigma^p (\beta'_{m,t}) (p, -p) - \beta'_{m,t} \sigma^{-p} (\alpha_{n,i}) (-p, p)$
+ $\beta_{m,s} \sigma^{-q} (\alpha'_{n,j}) (-q, q) - \alpha'_{n,j} \sigma^q (\beta_{m,s}) (q, -q).$

A Remark on the Dixmier Conjecture

Using the equalities $(-p, p) = \sigma^{-p}((p, -p))$ and $(-q, q) = \sigma^{-q}((q, -q))$, the last equality above can be rewritten as follows

(1-ab)
$$1 = (1 - \sigma^{-p})(a) + (1 - \sigma^{-q})(b)$$

where $a = \alpha_{n,i}\sigma^p(\beta'_{m,t})(p,-p) \in K[H]$ and $b = \alpha'_{n,j}\sigma^q(\beta_{m,s})(q,-q) \in K[H]$. Recall that $P = P_{-q} + P_p$, $Q = Q_{-p} + Q_q$,

$$(2-ab) p = mt = ni \ge 2 \quad \text{and} \quad q = ms = nj \ge 1.$$

Suppose that p = q, and so $P = P_{-p} + P_p$, $Q = Q_{-p} + Q_p$. Then $Q = \lambda P_p$ for some $\lambda \in K^*$. Notice that

$$1 = [P, Q] = [P, Q - \lambda P], \quad m(P) = 2, \quad m(Q - \lambda P) = 1.$$

By Case 4, the pair $(P, Q - \lambda P)$ is obtained from the pair (Y, X) by applying an automorphism of the Weyl algebra A_1 .

So, either p < q or p > q. In view of (P, Q)-symmetry (i.e., 1 = [P, Q] = [-Q, P]), it suffices to consider, say, the first case only. Since p < q, the equalities (2-ab) imply that i < j and t < s. Then, using (2.2) and the fact that $\deg(p, -p) = p$ for all $p \ge 1$, we see that

$$\deg a = \deg \alpha_{n,i} + \deg \beta'_{m,t} + p - 1, \deg b = \deg \alpha'_{n,i} + \deg \beta_{m,s} + q - 1.$$

Since i < j and t < s, deg $\alpha_{n,i} < \deg \alpha'_{n,j}$ and deg $\beta'_{m,t} < \deg \beta_{m,s}$. In particular, deg $a < \deg b$. This equality contradicts (1-ab) since, by (2.2), $0 = \deg 1 = \deg a - 1 - \deg b + 1 = \deg a - \deg b > 0$. This means that the cases p < q and p > q are impossible. The proof of the theorem is complete.

Corollary 2.3 Let P, Q be elements of the first Weyl algebra A_1 with m(P) = 1 or m(Q) = 1. If [P,Q] = 1, then $P = \tau(Y)$ and $Q = \tau(X)$ for some automorphism $\tau \in \operatorname{Aut}_K(A_1)$.

Proof Without loss of generality we may assume m(Q) = 1 and $m(P) \ge 3$. That is, $Q = Q_q$ and $P = \sum_{i \in I} P_i$, where $I \subset \mathbb{Z}$ is a finite set, $q \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}$ and the elements Q_q and P_i are homogeneous in A_1 . By (2.1), we may assume that q > 0. Then $1 = [P, Q] = \sum_i [P_i, Q_q]$ implies that $-q \in I$, $[P_{-q}, Q_q] = 1$ and $[P_j, Q_q] = 0$ for all $j \in I$ such that $j \neq -q$. By Theorem 1.1,

$$q = 1$$
, $Q_1 = \lambda X$, $P_{-1} = \lambda^{-1} Y$ for some $\lambda \in K^*$.

By Lemma 2.2, $C := P - P_{-1} \in C_A(X) = K[X]$. Then $P = \tau(Y)$ and $Q = \tau(X)$, where $\tau: A_1 \to A_1, X \mapsto \lambda X, Y \mapsto \lambda^{-1}Y + C$, is an automorphism.

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