A quick and simple proof of Sherman's theorem on order in C^*-algebras

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To every proper convex cone in any real linear space there is (see [1], [2]) a corresponding order relation. A cone is said to be a lattice if any two elements in it have a supremum for this ordering.

Theorem (S. Sherman). Let $\mathfrak{A}$ be a C^*-algebra with or without a unit and let $\mathfrak{A}_+$ be the real cone of all positive elements in $\mathfrak{A}$. The cone $\mathfrak{A}_+$ is a lattice if and only if $\mathfrak{A}$ is Abelian.

Proof. If $\mathfrak{A}$ is Abelian then (by the Gelfand-Naimark theorem) it is easily seen that $\mathfrak{A}_+$ is a lattice.
To prove the converse, suppose that $\mathfrak{A}$ is not Abelian. Then there exists (see [3], [5], [6], [8]) an irreducible $*$-representation $x \mapsto A_x$ of $\mathfrak{A}$ on a Hilbert space $\mathcal{H}$ of dimension ≥ 2. Choose in $\mathcal{H}$ two elements ξ_1, ξ_2 such that $\|\xi_1\| = \|\xi_2\| = 1$ and $\xi_1 \perp \xi_2$, and write

$$\eta_1 = \frac{\xi_1 + \xi_2}{\sqrt{2}} \quad \text{and} \quad \eta_2 = \frac{\xi_1 - \xi_2}{\sqrt{2}}$$

Denote the corresponding positive linear forms (pure states) on $\mathfrak{A}$ by φ_i, ψ_i :

$$\varphi_i(x) = (A_x\xi_i, \xi_i) \quad \text{and} \quad \psi_i(x) = (A_x\eta_i, \eta_i) \qquad x \in \mathfrak{A}, i = 1, 2$$

Let $\mathfrak{A}_H$ be the real linear space of all Hermitian elements in $\mathfrak{A}$. Now $\mathfrak{A}_H = \mathfrak{A}_+ - \mathfrak{A}_+$; in a natural way $\mathfrak{A}_H$ is an ordered topological vector space with positive cone $\mathfrak{A}_+$ (see [3], [6], [8]). The cone of all positive linear forms on $\mathfrak{A}_H$ will be denoted by P. Restriction of a positive linear form on $\mathfrak{A}$ to $\mathfrak{A}_H$ gives an element

*Work done as a student at the University of Groningen (the Netherlands).

Received by the editors September 1995.
Communicated by J. Schmets.
1991 *Mathematics Subject Classification* : 46L05, 46A40.
Key words and phrases : C^*-algebra, positive cone, lattice.