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1. INTRODUCTION

Central to Banach Space theory is the study of the classical Banach spaces c_0, ℓ^p, L^p $(1 \leq p \leq \infty)$, $C(K)$, and of their relationship with general Banach spaces.

The space ℓ^1 is of special importance in the theory of general Banach spaces. This is due to a phenomenon of considerable interest, namely that many pathological properties of Banach spaces are closely related to the fact that they have subspaces close to ℓ^1. This is true in the "local" theory of Banach spaces (see e.g. Pisier's work [P] for a celebrated example) as well as in infinite dimensional theory, the subject of our present interest.

Among the "elementary" spaces c_0, ℓ^p, $p < \infty$, ℓ^1 is the only one that has a nonseparable dual. If a Banach space contains ℓ^1, its dual is nonseparable. (For simplicity, we say that a Banach space contains ℓ^1 if it contains a subspace isomorphic to ℓ^1.) It was conjectured for a long time that the converse holds. This conjecture was disproved in 1974 by a deep example of R. C. James, the so called James tree space JT. (This space and its variations remain of considerable interest.) Thus it came as a surprise that simple criteria allow one to decide whether or not a Banach space contains a copy of ℓ^1. The main results in that direction were proven in 1974 by H. P. Rosenthal, and surely constitute one of the most beautiful achievements of Banach space theory. One of