

Whitehead modules over large principal ideal domains

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Abstract. We consider the Whitehead problem for principal ideal domains of large size. It is proved, in ZFC, that some p.i.d.'s of size $\geq \aleph_2$ have non-free Whitehead modules even though they are not complete discrete valuation rings.

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A module M is a *Whitehead module* if $\text{Ext}_R^1(M, R) = 0$. The second author proved that the problem of whether every Whitehead \mathbb{Z} -module is free is independent of ZFC + GCH (cf. [5], [6], [7]). This was extended in [1] to modules over principal ideal domains of cardinality at most \aleph_1 . Here we consider the Whitehead problem for modules over principal ideal domains (p.i.d.'s) of cardinality $> \aleph_1$.

If R is any p.i.d. which is not a complete discrete valuation ring, then an R -module of countable rank is Whitehead if and only if it is free (cf. [3]). On the other hand, if R is a complete discrete valuation ring, then it is cotorsion and hence every torsion-free R -module is a Whitehead module (cf. [2, XII.1.17]).

It will be convenient to decree that a field is not a p.i.d. and to use the term “slender” to designate a p.i.d. which is not a complete discrete valuation ring, or equivalently, is not cotorsion (cf. [2, III.2.9]). We will say that a module is κ -generated if it is generated by a subset of size $\leq \kappa$ and that it is κ -free if every submodule generated by $< \kappa$ elements is free. (Note that, by Pontryagin’s Criterion and induction on κ , every \aleph_1 -free module which has rank $\leq \kappa$ is κ -generated.)

An argument due to the second author (cf. [7] or [8]) shows that it is consistent with ZFC + GCH that for any p.i.d. R (of arbitrary size), there are Whitehead R -modules of rank $\geq |R|$ which are not free.

If the p.i.d. R is slender and has cardinality at most \aleph_1 , the Axiom of Constructibility ($V = L$) implies that every Whitehead R -module is free (cf. [1]). Our

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main result is that the story is different for p.i.d.'s of larger size. We will prove the following theorems in ZFC.

Theorem 1. *There is a slender p.i.d. R of cardinality 2^{\aleph_1} such that every \aleph_1 -free \aleph_1 -generated R -module is a Whitehead module. Hence there are non-free Whitehead R -modules which are \aleph_1 -generated.*

Theorem 2. *There is a p.i.d. R of cardinality \aleph_2 such that an \aleph_1 -generated R -module is Whitehead only if it is free.*

Assuming $V = L$ and using the existing theory (cf. [1]) one easily obtains the following:

Corollary 3. ($V = L$) *There are principal ideal domains R_1 and R_2 each of cardinality \aleph_2 and non-slender such that:*

(1) *an R_1 -module M (of arbitrary cardinality) is Whitehead if and only if M is the union of a continuous chain, $M = \bigcup_{\alpha < \lambda} M_\alpha$ for some λ , such that for all $\alpha < \lambda$, $M_{\alpha+1}/M_\alpha$ is \aleph_1 -free and \aleph_1 -generated;*

(2) *an R_2 -module M (of arbitrary cardinality) is Whitehead if and only if M is free. \square*

The theorems can be generalized to other cardinals: see Theorems 6 and 7 at the end of the sections.

1 Proof of Theorem 1

The ring R in Theorem 1 will be constructed by a transfinite induction so that for every module F/K (F free) which is \aleph_1 -free and \aleph_1 -generated, $\text{Ext}(F/K, R) = 0$, i.e., every homomorphism from K to R extends to a homomorphism from F to R . The following proposition provides the inductive step.

Proposition 4. *Let R be a local slender p.i.d. with maximal ideal pR , and let $K \subseteq F$ be free R -modules of rank \aleph_1 such that F/K is \aleph_1 -free. Let $\psi : K \rightarrow R$ be an R -homomorphism. Then there is a local slender p.i.d. R^+ containing R as subring, with maximal ideal pR^+ and of cardinality $= |R| + \aleph_1$ such that the R^+ -homomorphism $1_{R^+} \otimes_R \psi : R^+ \otimes_R K \rightarrow R^+ \otimes_R R$ extends to an R^+ -homomorphism $\varphi : R^+ \otimes_R F \rightarrow R^+ \otimes_R R$.*

Proof. Write $F = \bigcup_{\alpha < \omega_1} F_\alpha$ as a continuous union of submodules of countable rank with $F_0 = 0$. For each $\alpha < \omega_1$, $F_\alpha + K/K$ is free; let $\{b_i^\alpha : i \in I_\alpha\}$ be a linearly independent subset of F_α such that $\{b_i^\alpha + K : i \in I_\alpha\}$ is a basis of $F_\alpha + K/K$. ($I_0 = \emptyset$.) Then for all $\alpha < \beta < \omega_1$ and all $i \in I_\alpha$, $b_i^\alpha = \sum_{j \in I_\beta} r_{i,j}^{\alpha,\beta} b_j^\beta + k_i^{\alpha,\beta}$ for some unique $r_{i,j}^{\alpha,\beta} \in R$ (which are equal to 0 for almost all j) and $k_i^{\alpha,\beta} \in K$. Let $s_i^{\alpha,\beta} = \psi(k_i^{\alpha,\beta})$.

We claim that there is a local slender p.i.d. R^+ of cardinality $= |R| + \aleph_1$ containing R as subring and with maximal ideal pR^+ and elements $x_i^\alpha \in R^+$ ($\alpha < \omega_1, i \in I_\alpha$) such

that $x_i^\alpha = \sum_{j \in I_\beta} r_{i,j}^{\alpha,\beta} x_j^\beta + s_i^{\alpha,\beta}$ for all $\alpha < \beta < \omega_1$ and $i \in I_\alpha$. Supposing this for the moment, let us finish the proof. Clearly $\{b_i^\alpha : \alpha < \omega_1, i \in I_\alpha\} \cup K$ generates $R^+ \otimes_R F$ as R^+ -module. Define φ extending $1_{R^+} \otimes_R \psi$ by $\varphi(1 \otimes b_i^\alpha) = x_i^\alpha \otimes 1$. We must check that this is well-defined. For this it suffices to prove that $\varphi(1 \otimes b_i^\alpha) = \sum_{j \in I_\beta} r_{i,j}^{\alpha,\beta} \varphi(1 \otimes b_j^\beta) + (1 \otimes \psi)(1 \otimes k_i^{\alpha,\beta})$ for all $\alpha < \beta < \omega_1$ and $i \in I_\alpha$. But this is implied by the assumption that $x_i^\alpha = \sum_{j \in I_\beta} r_{i,j}^{\alpha,\beta} x_j^\beta + s_i^{\alpha,\beta}$.

So it remains to define R^+ . Let $R^0 = R$ and for $0 < \alpha < \omega_1$, let $R^\alpha = R[\{x_i^\alpha : i \in I_\alpha\}]$, the polynomial ring over R in the commuting indeterminates x_i^α , $i \in I_\alpha$. For $\alpha < \beta < \omega_1$, let $\pi_\beta^\alpha : R^\alpha \rightarrow R^\beta$ be the ring homomorphism which is the identity on R and takes x_i^α to $\sum_{j \in I_\beta} r_{i,j}^{\alpha,\beta} x_j^\beta + s_i^{\alpha,\beta}$. It is easy to check, using the fact that the $\{b_i^\gamma : i \in I_\gamma\}$ are linearly independent, that $\pi_\gamma^\beta \circ \pi_\beta^\alpha = \pi_\gamma^\alpha$ whenever $\alpha < \beta < \gamma < \omega_1$. Let R' with maps $\pi^\alpha : R^\alpha \rightarrow R'$ be the direct limit of this \aleph_1 -directed system of homomorphisms. Clearly each R^α is a unique factorization domain such that p is prime in R^α . Since the system is directed, R' is an integral domain and p is prime in R' . Moreover, since the system is \aleph_1 -directed, $\bigcap_{n \in \omega} p^n R' = 0$ since the same is true in each R^α . If $\{a_n : n \in \omega\}$ is a Cauchy sequence in R which does not have a limit (in the p -adic topology), then $\{t\pi_\alpha^0(a_n) : n \in \omega\}$ does not have a limit in the p -adic topology on R^α for all $t \in R^\alpha - pR^\alpha$. Hence, by the \aleph_1 -directedness, the same holds for $\{\pi^0(a_n) : n \in \omega\}$ in R' .

Finally, let R^+ be the localization of R' at the prime p . We appeal to the following elementary Lemma to finish. \square

Lemma 5. *Suppose R' is an integral domain with a prime p such that $\bigcap_{n \in \omega} p^n R' = 0$. Then the localization $R'_{(p)}$ of R' at p is a p.i.d.*

Proof. Given a non-zero proper ideal I of $R'_{(p)}$, let $I' = I \cap R' \left(= \left\{ r \in R' : \frac{r}{1} \in I \right\} \right)$.

Let m be minimal such that $I' \cap (p^m R' - p^{m+1} R') \neq \emptyset$. Clearly m exists, by hypothesis and since I' is non-zero. We claim that $I = p^m R'_{(p)}$. Let $a \in I' \cap (p^m R' - p^{m+1} R')$; then $a = p^m r$ for some $r \in R'$ and $r \notin pR'$; so r is a

unit in $R'_{(p)}$ and thus $p^m \in I$. Now for any non-zero $\frac{b}{t} \in I$, $b \in I' - \{0\}$ so

$b \in I' \cap (p^n R' - p^{n+1} R')$ for some $n \geq m$. Thus $b = p^n c$ for some $c \in R'$ and $n \geq m$.

But then $\frac{b}{t} = p^n \frac{c}{t} \in p^m R'_{(p)}$. Therefore $I = p^m R'_{(p)}$. \square

Proof of Theorem 1. Let $\lambda = 2^{\aleph_1}$. We define a ring R on the set λ which is the union of a continuous chain of rings R_ν ($\nu < \lambda$) such that for each $\nu < \lambda$, $R_{\nu+1}$ is of the form $(R_\nu)^+$ for some quadruple $(R_\nu, K_\nu, F_\nu, \psi_\nu)$ satisfying the hypotheses of the Proposition. We begin, for example, with $R_0 = \mathbb{Z}_{(p)}$. It is easy to see that R is a local p.i.d. with prime p . Moreover, the proof of the Proposition shows that a witnessing Cauchy sequence to the incompleteness of R_0 is preserved at each stage and therefore also in R since ω_1 has cofinality $> \omega$. Because $\lambda^{\aleph_1} = \lambda$, we can choose the enumeration of quadruples $(R_\nu, K_\nu, F_\nu, \psi_\nu)$ such that for every \aleph_1 -generated \aleph_1 -free R -module F/K

(where $K \subseteq F$ are free R -modules) and every R -homomorphism $\psi : K \rightarrow R$, there is a $\nu < \lambda$ such that $R \otimes_{R_\nu} F_\nu$ is isomorphic to F under an isomorphism which takes $R \otimes_{R_\nu} K_\nu$ to K and identifies $1_R \otimes_{R_\nu} \psi_\nu$ with ψ under the natural isomorphism of $R \otimes_{R_\nu} R_\nu$ with R . (Note that $K \subseteq F$ and ψ can each be completely described by a sequence of \aleph_1 elements of $R = \lambda$.) \square

By using a direct system indexed by the countable rank submodules of F/K in the proof of the Proposition, we can prove the following more general version of the theorem. Part (1) of Corollary 3 can be correspondingly generalized.

Theorem 6. *For any cardinal $\kappa \geq \aleph_1$, there is a local slender p.i.d. R of cardinality 2^κ such that every \aleph_1 -free κ -generated R -module is a Whitehead module. \square*

2 Proof of Theorem 2

Let R be the polynomial ring $\mathcal{F}[X]$ where $\mathcal{F} = \mathbb{Q}(\{t_\nu : \nu < \omega_2\})$ and $\{t_\nu : \nu < \omega_2\}$ is an algebraically independent set.

Let A be an \aleph_1 -generated \aleph_1 -free R -module which is not free and let $A = \bigcup_{\alpha < \omega_1} A_\alpha$ be an \aleph_1 -filtration of A . Then there is a stationary set S of limit ordinals such that for $\gamma \in S$, $A_{\gamma+1}/A_\gamma$ is not free. Without loss of generality we can assume that there is a $d \in \omega$ such that for all $\gamma \in S$, $A_{\gamma+1}/A_\gamma$ is of rank $d+1$ and not free but every submodule of rank $\leq d$ is free. (Note that we allow $A_{\alpha+1}/A_\alpha$ to be non-free for $\alpha \notin S$.) Thus $A_{\gamma+1}/A_\gamma$ is isomorphic to F'_γ/K'_γ where F'_γ is free on $\{y_{\gamma,n} : n \in \omega\} \cup \{x_{\gamma,l} : l < d\}$ and K'_γ has a basis $\{w'_{\gamma,n} : n \in \omega\}$ where

$$w'_{\gamma,n} = p_{\gamma,n}y_{\gamma,n+1} - y_{\gamma,n} - \sum_{l < d} s_{\gamma,n,l}x_{\gamma,l}$$

for some $p_{\gamma,n}, s_{\gamma,n,l} \in R$ where the $p_{\gamma,n}$ are non-units of R (not necessarily prime). (Compare, for example, [4, Observation 3.1].)

Let $F = \bigoplus_{\beta < \omega_1} F_\beta$ and $K = \bigoplus_{\beta < \omega_1} K_\beta$ be as in [2, Lemma XII.1.4]; that is, for all $\alpha < \omega_1$, $\bigoplus_{\beta < \alpha} F_\beta / \bigoplus_{\beta < \alpha} K_\beta \cong A_\alpha$ and $\bigoplus_{\beta \leq \alpha} F_\beta / (\bigoplus_{\beta < \alpha} F_\beta + K_\alpha) \cong A_{\alpha+1}/A_\alpha$. Moreover, by the proof of [2, Lemma XII.1.4], we can assume that for $\gamma \in S$, F'_γ is a summand of F_γ and K'_γ has a basis which includes $\{w_{\gamma,n} : n \in \omega\}$ where

$$w_{\gamma,n} = w'_{\gamma,n} - a_{\gamma,n}$$

for some $a_{\gamma,n} \in \bigoplus_{\beta < \gamma} F_\beta$ (and $\psi_\gamma(w'_{\gamma,n}) = \varphi_\gamma(a_{\gamma,n}) \in A_\gamma$). Fix a basis \mathcal{B} of F which is the union of a basis \mathcal{B}_β for each F_β and which includes $\bigcup_{\gamma \in S} \{y_{\gamma,n} : n \in \omega\} \cup \{x_{\gamma,l} : l < d\}$. Also fix a basis of K which includes $\bigcup_{\gamma \in S} \{w_{\gamma,n} : n \in \omega\}$. Given an element r of R , we will say $\mu \in \omega_2$ occurs in r if r does not belong to $\mathbb{Q}(\{t_\nu : \nu \in \omega_2 - \{\mu\}\})[X]$. Given an element z of F we will say that μ occurs in z if it occurs in some coefficient of the unique linear combination of elements of \mathcal{B} which equals z . There is a subset I of ω_2 of cardinality \aleph_1 such that all of the $p_{\gamma,n}$ and $s_{\gamma,n,l}$ ($\gamma \in S, n \in \omega, l < d$) belong to $\mathbb{Q}(\{t_i : i \in I\})[X]$. Moreover, we can choose I such that

it contains every μ which occurs in some coefficient of a linear combination of elements of \mathcal{B} which equals some $a_{\gamma,n}$ ($\gamma \in S, n \in \omega$). Without loss of generality (by renumbering the t_ν), $I = \omega_1$.

Now we define $\psi : K \rightarrow R$ by defining

$$\psi(w_{\gamma,n}) = t_{\omega_1 + \omega_\gamma + n}$$

and letting ψ be arbitrary on the other basis elements of K . We will show that $\text{Ext}(A, R) \neq 0$ by showing that ψ cannot be extended to a homomorphism from F into R . Suppose to the contrary that there is a homomorphism $\varphi : F \rightarrow R$ extending ψ . For each $\alpha < \omega_1$, let T_α be the set of all $\mu \in \omega_2$ which occur in $\varphi(b)$ for some $b \in \bigcup \{\mathcal{B}_\beta : \beta < \alpha\}$. Then the T_α ($\alpha \in \omega_1$) form a continuous chain of countable subsets of ω_2 and there is $\delta \in S$ such that $T_\delta \cap \{\omega_1 + \beta : \beta < \omega_1\} \subseteq \{\omega_1 + \beta : \beta < \delta\}$. There is a finite subset Z of ω_2 such that every μ which occurs in $\varphi(y_{\delta,0})$ or in $\varphi(x_{\delta,l})$ for some $l < d$ belongs to Z . Let $R^* = \mathbb{Q}(\{t_\nu : \nu \in \omega_1 \cup T_\delta \cup Z\})[X]$, a subring of $R = \mathcal{F}[X]$. Now for all $n \in \omega$ we have

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi(w_{\delta,n}) &= \psi(w_{\delta,n}) = t_{\omega_1 + \omega_\delta + n} \\ &= p_{\delta,n} \varphi(y_{\delta,n+1}) - \varphi(y_{\delta,n}) - \sum_{l < d} s_{\delta,n,l} \varphi(x_{\delta,l}) - \varphi(a_{\delta,n}). \end{aligned}$$

If we can show that this implies that $t_{\omega_1 + \omega_\delta + n}$ belongs to R^* for all $n \in \omega$, we will have a contradiction of the choice of T_δ and the fact that Z is finite. We will show this by induction on n along with simultaneously proving that $\varphi(y_{\delta,n+1}) \in R^*$. We begin with $n = -1$: $\varphi(y_{\delta,0})$ belongs to R^* by definition of Z . Now suppose the inductive hypothesis is true for $n - 1$ and we prove it for n . By the last displayed formula, the inductive hypothesis and the choice of R^* , there is an element $r_n \in R^*$ such that $p_{\delta,n} \varphi(y_{\delta,n+1}) = r_n - t_{\omega_1 + \omega_\delta + n}$. If $t_{\omega_1 + \omega_\delta + n} \notin R^*$, there is an automorphism Θ of R which fixes R^* and takes $t_{\omega_1 + \omega_\delta + n}$ to t_τ for some $\tau \notin T_\delta$. Then $p_{\delta,n} \Theta(\varphi(y_{\delta,n+1})) = r_n - t_\tau$. (Remember that $p_{\delta,n} \in R^*$.) Therefore, subtracting, $p_{\delta,n}$ divides $t_{\omega_1 + \omega_\delta + n} - t_\tau$, which is impossible since $p_{\delta,n}$ is a non-unit. Thus $t_{\omega_1 + \omega_\delta + n}$ and hence $p_{\delta,n} \varphi(y_{\delta,n+1})$ belong to R^* . But then since $p_{\delta,n} \in R^*$ we can prove by induction on m that the coefficient of X^m in $\varphi(y_{\delta,n+1}) \in \mathcal{F}[X]$, belongs to $\mathbb{Q}(\{t_\nu : \nu \in \omega_1 \cup T_\delta \cup Z\})$, and hence that $\varphi(y_{\delta,n+1})$ belongs to R^* . \square

We can even find a principal ideal domain of cardinality \aleph_1 which satisfies the conclusion of Theorem 2. Namely, let $R = \mathcal{F}_1[X]$ where $\mathcal{F}_1 = \mathbb{Q}(\{t_\nu : \nu < \omega_1\})$. Define $\psi(w_{\delta,n})$ to be $t_{\omega_\delta + \sigma_\delta + n}$ where $\omega_\delta + \sigma_\delta$ is larger than any μ which occurs in any $p_{\delta,k}$ or $s_{\delta,k,l}$ for $k \in \omega, l < d$. Define T_α as before and choose $\delta \in S$ such that $T_\delta \cap \omega_1 \subseteq \omega_\delta$. Let $R^* = \mathbb{Q}(\{t_\nu : \nu \in \omega_\delta + \sigma_\delta \cup T_\delta \cup Z\})[X]$.

We can also localize without affecting the property of the ring that we desire. More generally, we have:

Theorem 7. *For any $\kappa \geq \aleph_1$ there is a local p.i.d. R of cardinality κ such that an R -module of cardinality $\leq \kappa$ is Whitehead only if it is free. \square*

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