

A remark on bigness of the tangent bundle of a smooth projective variety and D -simplicity of its section rings

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We point out a connection between bigness of the tangent bundle of a smooth projective variety X over \mathbb{C} and simplicity of the section rings of X as modules over their rings of differential operators. As a consequence, we see that the tangent bundle of a smooth projective toric variety or a (partial) flag variety is big. Some other applications and related questions are discussed.

Keywords: Big vector bundle; tangent bundle; D -simple ring.

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1. Introduction

Let X be a smooth projective variety of dimension n over \mathbb{C} and T_X be the tangent bundle of X . A well-known theorem of Mori [17] says that if T_X is ample, then X is isomorphic to the projective space \mathbb{P}^n . In [3], Campana and Peternell initiated a program to characterize projective manifolds whose tangent bundles are numerically effective (nef). In view of the theory of positivity of vector bundles [13, 14], it is natural to consider the following.

Problem 1.1. *Classify projective manifolds whose tangent bundles are big.*

Recall that a line bundle L on X is big if and only if the map

$$\phi_m : X \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}H^0(X, L^{\otimes m})$$

defined by $L^{\otimes m}$ is birational onto its image for some $m > 0$ [14, Definition 2.2.1]. A vector bundle E on X is big if the line bundle $\mathcal{O}(1)$ on the projective bundle

$\mathbb{P}(E) := \text{Proj}(\text{Sym } E)$ is big. Except for the case where E is nef (see the discussion in Sec. 4), it is in general not clear how to determine the bigness of a vector bundle. Here, we propose the following criterion for bigness of the tangent bundle T_X .

Theorem 1.2. *If X admits an ample line bundle whose section ring S is simple as a module over its ring of \mathbb{C} -linear differential operators D_S , then T_X is a big vector bundle.*

In fact, it is shown that if T_X is not big, then the section ring S associated to any ample line bundle on X has no differential operators of negative weight. In particular, the maximal graded ideal of S is a D_S -submodule (S is not D_S -simple) and D_S itself is not a simple ring.

When $\dim X = 1$, Theorem 1.2 was proved by Levasseur [15] following the results in [1, 12]. The essential ideas due to Bernšteĭn, Gel'fand, Gel'fand [1] show that there exist no differential operators of negative weight on

$$S = \mathbb{C}[x, y, z]/\langle x^3 + y^3 + z^3 \rangle$$

by using the geometric properties of the cubic curve $\text{Proj } S$. These ideas generalize readily to the higher-dimensional cases (see Sec. 2).

As the first consequence of Theorem 1.2, we have the following corollary whose proof can be found in Sec. 3.

Corollary 1.3. *The tangent bundle on a smooth projective toric variety or on a (partial) flag variety is big.*

Another application of Theorem 1.2 is that if T_X is not big and if S is a quasi-Gorenstein section ring on X , then the multiplier ideal $\mathcal{J}(S)$ is a D_S -module (see Remark 3.4). This can be regarded as a characteristic 0 analog of Theorem 2.2(1) in [19]: every test ideal is a D -module.

In the case where T_X is nef, the bigness of T_X is equivalent to the positivity of the Segre class $s_n(T_X^*)$ [8, Sec. 3.1]. Using this and the results in [3], we show in Proposition 4.1 that if T_X is nef and big then X is Fano (i.e. $-K_X$ is ample). This provides higher-dimensional examples of smooth projective varieties whose section rings are not D -simple (e.g. abelian varieties or other non-Fano manifolds with nef T_X), generalizing the classical one-dimensional examples in [1, 15]. On the other hand, Proposition 4.1 gives a partial solution to Problem 1.1 when T_X is nef. In fact, following the discussions in Sec. 5 we expect that the tangent bundle T_X on a Fano manifold X is always big. When $\dim X \leq 3$ and T_X is nef, this is verified by computing the Segre class $s_n(T_X^*)$ using the classification in [3]. See the paragraph after Question 4.5 for more details.

To end the introduction, we mention that inspired by the proof of Proposition 4.1, one can prove a conjecture in [3] that states: if T_X is nef and $\chi(\mathcal{O}_X) = 1$ then X is Fano (see Theorem 4.3).

2. The Proof of Theorem 1.2

Except for Proposition 2.1, most parts of the following proof of Theorem 1.2 come from the arguments in [1, 12, 15]. We reproduce them here for the convenience of the reader.

Fix an ample line bundle L on X and set $S_i := H^0(X, L^i)$. Consider the associated section ring

$$S = S_L := \bigoplus_{i \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}} S_i.$$

Since X is smooth, it is well-known that S is a \mathbb{N} -graded normal domain that is finitely generated over $\mathbb{C} = S_0$. The maximal graded ideal of S will be denoted by

$$\mathfrak{m} := \bigoplus_{i \in \mathbb{N}} S_i.$$

Choose a representation T/J of S , where $T = \mathbb{C}[x_1, \dots, x_s]$ is a polynomial ring whose variable x_i has weight d_i and J is a homogeneous prime ideal. Thanks to the ampleness of L , the graded ring S satisfies the condition $(\#)$ in [12] which states that there exists l_0 such that for every $l \geq l_0$, $S^{(l)} = \bigoplus_{i \in \mathbb{N}} S_{il}$ is generated by $S_l = [S^{(l)}]_1$ over $S_0 = \mathbb{C}$.

Let D_S be the ring of \mathbb{C} -linear differential operators on S in the sense of Grothendieck. By definition, the ring D_S has an increasing filtration $\{D_m\}_{m \geq 0}$ by the order of the differential operators, where $D_0 = S$ and for $m > 0$

$$D_m = \{\delta \in \text{Hom}_{\mathbb{C}}(S, S) \mid [\delta, s] \in D_{m-1} \text{ for all } s \in S\}.$$

Following [1] or [18], we decompose D_S as

$$D_S = S \bigoplus \bigcup_{m \geq 1} \text{Der}^m(S),$$

where

$$\text{Der}^m(S) := \{\delta \in D_S \mid \text{ord } \delta \leq m \text{ and } \delta(1) = 0\}$$

is the set of all derivations of order $\leq m$. An element $\delta \in \text{Der}^m(S)$ is called homogeneous of weight l ($l \in \mathbb{Z}$) if $\delta(S_i) \subseteq S_{i+l}$ for all i . In particular, the Euler derivation

$$I = \sum_{i=1}^s d_i x_i \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} \in \text{Der}^1(S)$$

is homogeneous of weight 0. Moreover, $\text{Der}^m(S)$ can be decomposed as

$$\text{Der}^m(S) = \bigoplus_{l \in \mathbb{Z}} \text{Der}_l^m(S),$$

where $\text{Der}_l^m(S)$ is the space of homogeneous derivations of S with weight l and order $\leq m$. Notice that if

$$\text{Der}_l^m(S) = 0 \quad \text{for all } m \geq 0 \text{ and } l < 0, \tag{2.1}$$

then the maximal ideal \mathfrak{m} is a D_S -submodule of S ; in particular, the ring S is not D_S -simple. Our goal is to show that non-bigness of T_X implies the condition (2.1).

Let $\hat{X} = \text{Spec}(S)$ be the cone over X and $U := \hat{X} \setminus \{\mathfrak{m}\}$ be the punctured spectrum. We have the natural projection

$$\pi : U \rightarrow X = \text{Proj } S.$$

Let $\mathcal{D}er^m$ be the sheaf of derivations on U of order $\leq m$ and let $\mathcal{D}er_l^m$ be the sheaf of derivations δ on U of order $\leq m$ that satisfy the condition $[I, \delta] = I\delta - \delta I = l\delta$ and denote $\Delta_l^m := \pi_* \mathcal{D}er_l^m$. Since $\text{Der}^m(S)$ is the dual of the m th-order differential module $\Omega^m(S) = \mathcal{I}/\mathcal{I}^{m+1}$ where \mathcal{I} is the diagonal ideal of $S \otimes_{\mathbb{C}} S$, it is reflexive. Moreover, since S is normal, standard facts about reflexive sheaves [10, Proposition 1.6] implies that $\Gamma(U, \mathcal{D}er^m) = \text{Der}^m(S)$. In particular, by comparing the weight of derivations we have

$$\Gamma(X, \Delta_l^m) = \Gamma(U, \mathcal{D}er_l^m) = \text{Der}_l^m(S).$$

For $|l| \geq l_0$ in condition (#), one can check locally that $\Delta_l^m \cong \Delta_0^m \otimes L^l$ ($m \geq 0$) where this isomorphism is compatible with the natural embedding $\Delta_l^m \hookrightarrow \Delta_l^n$ ($m < n$) [12, Lemma 6]. In particular, we have the following exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow \Delta_l^{m-1} \rightarrow \Delta_l^m \rightarrow \sigma_m \otimes L^l \rightarrow 0 \quad (m \geq 2, |l| \geq l_0). \quad (2.2)$$

Here $\sigma_m := \Delta_0^m / \Delta_0^{m-1}$ ($m \geq 2$) and we set $\sigma_1 = \Delta_0^1$.

By [12, Lemma 6(3)], we have the following short exact sequence that comes from the Euler derivation

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_X \xrightarrow{I} \sigma_1 \rightarrow T_X \rightarrow 0. \quad (2.3)$$

Taking symmetric power and using the facts that $\sigma_m = \text{Sym}^m \sigma_1$ [12, Lemma 6(3)] and T_X are locally free, we have the exact sequence [12, Lemma 7]

$$0 \rightarrow \sigma_{m-1} \rightarrow \sigma_m \rightarrow \text{Sym}^m T_X \rightarrow 0 \quad (m \geq 2). \quad (2.4)$$

On the other hand, we need the following.

Proposition 2.1. *If T_X is not big, then*

$$H^0(X, \text{Sym}^m T_X \otimes L^l) = 0 \quad \text{for } m \geq 1 \text{ and } l < 0.$$

Proof. This can be achieved by a similar argument as in [14, Example 6.1.23]: Suppose $H^0(X, \text{Sym}^m T_X \otimes A^{-1}) \neq 0$ for some m and some ample line bundle A on X . Since $\mathcal{O}(1) := \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(T_X)}(1)$ is π -ample, $\mathcal{O}(1) \otimes \pi^*(A^{\otimes k})$ is ample for k sufficiently large. Denote $\xi = c_1(\mathcal{O}(1))$ and $\alpha = c_1(A)$. By the projection formula, $\pi_*(\mathcal{O}(m) \otimes \pi^* A^{-1}) = \text{Sym}^m T_X \otimes A^{-1}$. So $H^0(\mathbb{P}(T_X), \mathcal{O}(m) \otimes \pi^* A^{-1}) \neq 0$ and hence $m\xi - \pi^*\alpha$ is an effective class. For k sufficiently large,

$$(km + 1)\xi = [km\xi - \pi^*(k\alpha)] + [\xi + \pi^*(k\alpha)]$$

is a sum of an effective class and an ample class. Therefore, ξ is big. \square

From now, assume that T_X is not big. By Proposition 2.1, we have

$$H^0(X, T_X \otimes L^l) = 0 \quad \text{for } l < 0.$$

The global evaluation of (2.3) tensored with L^l together with the Kodaira vanishing theorem imply that

$$\mathrm{Der}_l^1(S) = H^0(X, \Delta_l^1) = 0 \quad (l < 0).$$

Moreover, the global evaluation of (2.4) tensored with L^l together with the vanishing

$$H^0(X, \mathrm{Sym}^m T_X \otimes L^l) = 0 \quad (m \geq 2, l < 0)$$

imply that

$$H^0(X, \sigma_m \otimes L^l) = H^0(X, \sigma_1 \otimes L^l) = H^0(X, \Delta_l^1) = 0 \quad (m \geq 1, l < 0).$$

Therefore, it follows from the global evaluation of (2.2) $\otimes L^l$ that

$$\mathrm{Der}_l^m(S) = H^0(X, \Delta_l^m) = H^0(X, \Delta_l^1) = 0 \quad (m \geq 1, l \leq -l_0).$$

Now, for any $\delta \in \mathrm{Der}_l^m(S)$ ($m \geq 1, l < 0$), we have $\delta^k \in \mathrm{Der}_{kl}^{km}(S) = 0$ for k sufficiently large. This forces $\delta = 0$, and the proof of Theorem 1.2 is finished.

3. Some Applications

The following fact ([19, Proposition 3.1] or [16, Proposition 3.5]) says that D -simplicity is preserved when considering pure subrings.

Proposition 3.1. *Let S and T be arbitrary commutative algebra over a commutative ring A . Suppose that $S \hookrightarrow T$ and that this inclusion splits as a map of S -modules. If T is a simple $D_A(T)$ -module, then S is a simple $D_A(S)$ -module.*

In particular, if S admits a split embedding into a polynomial algebra $\mathbb{C}[x_1, \dots, x_t]$, then S is D_S -simple.

We are now ready to prove the main corollary in the introduction which states: the tangent bundle on a smooth projective toric variety or on a (partial) flag variety is always big.

Proof of Corollary 1.3. For the toric case, this follows from the facts that every section ring of a smooth projective toric variety is a normal semigroup ring [6, Sec. 3.4] and that every positive normal semigroup ring admits a split embedding into a polynomial algebra [2, 6.1.10]. Alternatively, one can check directly that every normal semigroup ring S is D_S -simple (see e.g. [11, Theorem 3.7]).

For the flag case, note that the homogeneous coordinate ring of a (partial) flag variety under the Plücker embedding is isomorphic to the ring of invariants R^G of a polynomial algebra R under the action of certain linearly reductive group G [7, Sec. 9.2]. The existence of a Reynolds operator $\rho : R \rightarrow R^G$ [2, Sec. 6.5] guarantees that the embedding $R^G \rightarrow R$ is split. \square

Remark 3.2. The flag case of Corollary 1.3 recovers the bigness of $T_{\mathbb{P}(T_{\mathbb{P}^2})}$ in [5, Example 2].

Remark 3.3. It is pointed out by Mustaa that the toric case of Corollary 1.3 can also be recovered by using the Euler exact sequence. On the other hand, the pseudoeffective cone of a projectivized toric vector bundle $\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{F})$ on a toric variety X is described using Klyachko filtration [9]. In the case where \mathcal{F} is the tangent bundle T_X , the pseudoeffective cone of $\mathbb{P}(T_X)$ is generated by the classes \mathcal{D}_H , for hypersurfaces H in \mathbb{P}_F (the π -fiber over 1_T), and the classes D_i (the preimage under π of the torus invariant prime divisors on X). As Payne mentioned to us, the results in [9] might be helpful to re-establish the bigness of tangent bundles on smooth projective toric varieties.

We mention another consequence of Theorem 1.2.

Remark 3.4. For a normal standard graded ring S that is quasi-Gorenstein and has an isolated singularity, the multiplier ideals $\mathcal{J}(S)$ of S is a power of the maximal ideal \mathfrak{m} [21, Example 3.7]. Therefore, if the section ring S in Theorem 1.2 is quasi-Gorenstein, then $\mathcal{J}(S)$ is a D_S -submodule of S . This can be regarded as a characteristic 0 analog of [19, Theorem 2.2(1)]: every test ideal is a D -module.

4. The Case where T_X is nef

Recall that a vector bundle E of rank $r + 1$ on X is numerically effective (nef) if the line bundle $\mathcal{O}(1)$ on $\mathbb{P}(E)$ is nef, i.e. $c_1(\mathcal{O}(1)) \cdot C \geq 0$ for all curves C in $\mathbb{P}(E)$. In this case, the vector bundle E is big if and only if the volume of $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(E)}(1)$

$$\int_{\mathbb{P}(E)} c_1(\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(E)}(1))^{n+r} = \int_X s_n(E^*) > 0,$$

where $s_n(E^*)$ is the n th Segre class of the dual of E [13, Sec. 2.2.C], [8, Sec. 3.1]. The reader is cautioned that in [8], $\mathbb{P}(E)$ denotes the projective bundle of lines in E .

The study of projective manifolds with nef tangent bundle was initiated in [3]. In general, if T_X is nef, then the Chern classes

$$c_i := c_i(X) = c_i(T_X) \geq 0.$$

In this case, we have $(-K_X)^n = c_1^n \geq 0$ and the inequality is strict if and only if X is Fano (i.e. $-K_X$ is ample) [4, Theorem 1.2]. Moreover, the Schur polynomial [8, Example 12.1.7]

$$\Delta_\lambda = \det(c_{\lambda_i+j-i})_{1 \leq i, j \leq n} \geq 0$$

for any partition $\lambda = (\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \dots, \lambda_n)$ of n with $n \geq \lambda_1 \geq \lambda_2 \geq \dots \geq \lambda_n \geq 0$. Note that by [8, Lemma A.9.2]

$$s_n(T_X^*) = \Delta_{(1^n)}, \quad \text{where } (1^n) = (1, 1, \dots, 1),$$

so T_X is big if and only if $\Delta_{(1^n)} > 0$. On the other hand, for a partition $\mu = (\mu_1, \dots, \mu_n)$ of n with $n \geq \mu_1 \geq \dots \geq \mu_n \geq 0$, denote

$$c_\mu = c_{\mu_1} \cdot c_{\mu_2} \cdot \dots \cdot c_{\mu_n}.$$

It follows from the Pieri's formula that [7, Sec. 2.2]

$$c_\mu = \sum_{\lambda} K_{\lambda\mu} \Delta_\lambda, \quad (4.1)$$

where $K_{\lambda\mu}$ is the Kostka number and the sum runs over all partitions of n . We note that $K_{\lambda\lambda} = 1$ and that

$$K_{\lambda\mu} \neq 0 \text{ if and only if } \mu \leq \lambda \text{ (i.e. } \mu_1 + \cdots + \mu_i \leq \lambda_1 + \cdots + \lambda_i \text{ for all } i).$$

Proposition 4.1. *If T_X is nef and big, then X is Fano.*

Proof. From the discussion above, it suffices to show

$$c_1^n = 0 \Rightarrow \Delta_{(1^n)} = 0.$$

By (4.1),

$$c_1^n = c_{(1^n)} = \sum_{\lambda} K_{\lambda(1^n)} \Delta_\lambda = 0.$$

Since $(1^n) \leq \lambda$ for all partition λ , we have $K_{\lambda(1^n)} > 0$ and hence $\Delta_\lambda = 0$ for all λ . In particular, $\Delta_{(1^n)} = 0$. \square

Remark 4.2. Proposition 4.1 provides new examples where D_S is not simple, generalizing the classical examples in [1, 15].

Inspired by the proof of Proposition 4.1, we prove the following theorem that was conjectured in [3] and was verified for $n = \dim X \leq 4$ [4].

Theorem 4.3. *Let X be a projective manifold with T_X nef. If $\chi(\mathcal{O}_X) \neq 0$, then X is Fano.*

Proof. It suffices to show that $c_1^n = 0$ implies $\chi(\mathcal{O}_X) = 0$. By Hirzebruch–Riemann–Roch [8, Corollary 15.2.2],

$$\chi(\mathcal{O}_X) = \int_X \text{td}_n(T_X).$$

Since the n th Todd polynomial $\text{td}_n(T_X)$ of T_X is a \mathbb{Q} -linear combination of the c_λ 's [8, Example 3.2.4], we only have to show that $c_\lambda = 0$ for all $\lambda \in \Lambda_n$. Again, it follows from (4.1) that

$$[c_1^n = 0] \implies [\Delta_\lambda = 0 \text{ for all } \lambda \in \Lambda_n] \implies [c_\lambda = 0 \text{ for all } \lambda \in \Lambda_n]. \quad \square$$

Example 4.4. We give some explicit examples to illustrate (4.1).

- (1) When $n = 1$, $c_1 = \Delta_{(1)}$.
- (2) When $n = 2$, write $\lambda_1 = (1, 1)$ and $\lambda_2 = (2, 0)$. The Segre classes

$$\Delta_{(1,1)} = c_1^2 - c_2 = c_{\lambda_1} - c_{\lambda_2} \quad \text{and} \quad \Delta_{(2,0)} = c_2 = c_{\lambda_2}.$$

We have

$$(c_{\lambda_1}, c_{\lambda_2}) = (\Delta_{\lambda_1}, \Delta_{\lambda_2}) \cdot \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

(3) When $n = 3$, write $\lambda_1 = (1, 1, 1)$, $\lambda_2 = (2, 1, 0)$ and $\lambda_3 = (3, 0, 0)$. We have

$$(c_{\lambda_1}, c_{\lambda_2}, c_{\lambda_3}) = (\Delta_{\lambda_1}, \Delta_{\lambda_2}, \Delta_{\lambda_3}) \cdot \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

(4) When $n = 4$, write $\lambda_1 = (1, 1, 1, 1)$, $\lambda_2 = (2, 1, 1, 0)$, $\lambda_3 = (2, 2, 0, 0)$, $\lambda_4 = (3, 1, 0, 0)$ and $\lambda_5 = (4, 0, 0, 0)$. We have

$$(c_{\lambda_1}, c_{\lambda_2}, c_{\lambda_3}, c_{\lambda_4}, c_{\lambda_5}) = (\Delta_{\lambda_1}, \Delta_{\lambda_2}, \Delta_{\lambda_3}, \Delta_{\lambda_4}, \Delta_{\lambda_5}) \cdot \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 3 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 3 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Conversely, we ask the following.

Question 4.5. If X is Fano with nef T_X , is it true that T_X is big?

Using the classification in [3], Question 4.5 can be verified for $n \leq 3$ by computing the Segre class $\Delta_{(1^n)}$ or quoting the known results.

- (1) When $n = 1$, the only Fano curve is \mathbb{P}^1 and $T_{\mathbb{P}^1}$ is ample.
- (2) When $n = 2$, the only Fano surfaces with nef T_X are \mathbb{P}^2 and $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$. These are toric varieties and hence have big tangent bundles.
- (3) When $n = 3$, the only Fano threefolds with nef T_X are \mathbb{P}^3 , $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^2$, $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$, Q_3 , and $\mathbb{P}(T_{\mathbb{P}^2})$. The first three are toric varieties. The last two have big tangent bundles by [5, Example 1.2].

A stronger version of Question 4.5 (dropping the nefness assumption) has to do with D -simplicity of the section ring S (see Question 5.2).

5. Questions on D -Simplicity

Let Y be an affine algebraic variety over \mathbb{C} . When Y is smooth, it is well-known that its ring of differential operators D_Y is simple and Noetherian. The example in [1] shows that D_Y may not be simple nor Noetherian. On the other hand, it is shown in [16] that D_Y is simple if Y is a geometric invariant quotient of classical algebraic group acting on an affine space. It is asked in [16] whether the same result holds for other linear algebraic groups. See also Conjectures 1.1 and 1.2 of [22], in which the conjectures are proved in positive characteristics. Unfortunately, in view of Proposition 3.1, Theorem 1.2 is not helpful in finding counterexamples to this problem.

The results in [16] also suggest that D_Y might have nice properties when Y has only rational singularities. Although this is not true in general, it was proposed in [19] that Gorensteinness should play a role in answering this question. In fact, the main theorem in [19] shows that in positive characteristics a domain is strongly F -regular if and only if it is F -split and D -simple. In view of the correspondence between strong F -regularity and log terminal singularities and the fact that Gorenstein log terminal singularities are rational singularities, it is natural to ask the following question.

Question 5.1. Let Y be an affine variety over \mathbb{C} that is Gorenstein. Is it true that Y has at worst rational singularities if and only if \mathcal{O}_Y is a simple D_Y -module?

By [20, Proposition 6.2(2)], a normal projective variety is Fano and has rational singularities if and only if it admits a Gorenstein section ring with rational singularities. Therefore, Theorem 1.2 suggests the following question in Fano geometry.

Question 5.2. Does there exist a smooth Fano variety over \mathbb{C} whose tangent bundle is not big?

A positive answer to Question 5.2 will provide a counterexample to the necessary part of Question 5.1.

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