Sketch of a Proof That an Odd Perfect Number Relatively Prime to 3 Has at Least Eleven Prime Factors

By Peter Hagis, Jr.

Abstract. An argument is outlined which demonstrates that every odd perfect number which is not divisible by 3 has at least eleven distinct prime factors.

1. Introduction. A positive integer \( n \) is said to be perfect if \( \sigma(n) = 2n \), where \( \sigma(n) \) denotes the sum of the positive divisors of \( n \). No odd perfect numbers have been found, but it has not been proved that none exists. Throughout this paper \( N \) will represent an odd perfect number, and \( \omega(N) \) will denote the number of distinct prime factors of \( N \). It was shown in [1] that \( \omega(N) \geq 8 \), while if \( 3 \mid N \) it was proved by Kishore [6] that \( \omega(N) \geq 10 \). The purpose of the present paper is to sketch a proof of the following improvement of Kishore’s result.

**Theorem.** If \( N \) is an odd perfect number and \( 3 \nmid N \), then \( \omega(N) \geq 11 \).

We shall omit most of the details of the proof of this theorem. The complete proof, in the form of a handwritten manuscript [3] of approximately forty-five pages, has been deposited in the UMT file.

Our plan of attack is rather obvious. We assume the existence of an odd perfect number \( N \) such that \( 3 \nmid N \) and \( \omega(N) = 10 \) and show that such an assumption is untenable. In conjunction with Kishore’s result this yields our theorem. Our proof is largely computational and the necessary calculations and searches were carried out on the CDC CYBER 174 at the Temple University Computing Center. The total amount of computer time used was about 45 minutes.

2. Some Basic Facts. In what follows the letters \( p \) and \( q \), with or without subscripts, denote odd primes. If

\[
N = p_1^{a_1}p_2^{a_2} \cdots p_t^{a_t},
\]

where \( p_1 < p_2 < \cdots < p_t \) and \( a_i > 0 \) then \( p_i^{a_i} \) is called a component of \( N \). Euler showed that for every component except one, \( 2 \mid a_i \). For this special component, which we shall denote by \( \pi^m \), it is true that \( \pi \equiv m \equiv 1 \pmod{4} \).

It was proved in [4] that

\[
p_t \geq 100129,
\]

and in [2] it was shown that

\[
p_{t-1} \geq 1009.
\]
Now, let \( F_d \) be the \( d \)th cyclotomic polynomial and let \( E = E(p; q) \) be the exponent to which \( p \) belongs modulo \( q \). References for the following facts may be found in [1] and/or [8].

(4) \[
2N = \sigma(N) = \prod_{i=1}^{t} \sigma(p_i^{a_i}) = \prod_{i=1}^{t} \prod_{d} F_d(p_i)
\]
where \( d \) runs over the divisors of \( a_{i+1} \) which exceed 1.

(5) \[
q | F_k(p) \quad \text{if and only if} \quad k = q^\beta \cdot E(p; q).
\]
If \( \beta > 0 \) then \( q \parallel F_k(p) \); if \( \beta = 0 \) then \( q \equiv 1 \pmod{k} \).

(6) \[
\text{If } k > 3 \text{ then } F_k(p) \text{ has at least one prime factor } q \text{ such that } q \equiv 1 \pmod{k}.
\]

(7) \[
\text{If } q_1 | F_k(p) \text{ and } q_2 | F_{k}(p) \text{ where } k_1 > k_2 > 2 \text{ and } q_i \nmid k_i, \\text{ then } q_1 \neq q_2.
\]

If \( q \) is a Fermat prime and \( p^a \parallel N \); and we write \( b = v_q(K) \) if \( q^b \parallel K \), then:

(8) \[
v_q(\sigma(p^a)) = \begin{cases} 
  v_q(a + 1) & \text{if } E = 1, \\
  v_q(a + 1) + v_q(p + 1) & \text{if } E = 2 \text{ and } p = \pi, \\
  0 & \text{otherwise}.
\end{cases}
\]

If \( h(k) = \sigma(k)/k \), so that \( k \) is perfect if and only if \( h(k) = 2 \), and \( h(p^\infty) = p/(p - 1) \), then

(9) \[
1 \leq h(p^a) < h(p^b) < h(q^c)
\]
if \( 0 < a < b \leq \infty \), \( 1 < c \leq \infty \) and \( p > q \).

3. Three Important Lemmas. We remind the reader that \( N \) is an odd perfect number with special prime factor \( \pi \).

**Lemma 1.** If \( 5^b \parallel N \), where \( b \geq 5 \), and \( 5^{b-4} \parallel \pi + 1 \), then \( \pi \nmid \sigma(5^b) \).

**Lemma 2.** If \( 17^c \parallel N \), where \( c \geq 6 \), and \( 17^{c-3} \parallel \pi + 1 \), then \( \pi \nmid \sigma(17^c) \).

**Proof.** Since \( 17^{c-3} \parallel \pi + 1 \), we see that \( \pi + 1 = J \cdot 17^{c-3} \) where \( J \geq 2 \). Also, since \( 17^2 \parallel (\pi + 1) \), it follows that \( \pi + 1 \leq 9826\pi/9825 \). Therefore, \( \sigma(17^c) = (17^{c+1} - 1)/16 < 17^{c+1}/16 = 17^{c-3}17^4/16 \leq (\pi + 1)17^4/32 < 2611\pi \).

Now assume that \( \pi \nmid \sigma(17^c) \). Then \( \sigma(17^c) = S\pi \) where \( S < 2611 \). Since \( \sigma(17^c) = 1 + 17 + 17^2 + \ldots + 17^c \) and \( 17^3 \parallel (\pi + 1) \), we see that \( 307 \equiv S\pi \equiv -S \pmod{17^3} \). Therefore, \( S \geq 4606 \) which is impossible.

**Lemma 3.** If \( N = Mp^a \) where \( (M, p) = 1 \), and \( G(M) = 2/(2 - h(M)) \), then:

(i) \( p = G(M) - 1 \) if \( a = 1 \); (ii) \( G(M) - (p + 1)^{-1} \leq p < G(M) \) if \( a > 1 \).

A few remarks concerning Lemma 3 are in order. First, the fact that \( p < G(M) \) is proved in Section 1.4 of [8]; and a slightly erroneous version of the lemma is stated in [5]. Second, in (i) it is clear that \( p = \pi \). Third, referring to (1) we see that if \( 2 \leq s \leq t \) and \( p = p_s \) then from (ii), \( G(M) - (p_{s-1} + 3)^{-1} \leq p_s \).

4. Some Preliminary Results. We assume from now on that \( \frac{3}{7} N \) and \( \omega(N) = 10 \). Note first that from (2) and (3), \( p_9 \geq 1009 \) and \( p_{10} \geq 100129 \). Also, \( p_1 = 5 \), \( p_2 = 7 \).
and \( p_3 = 11 \) since otherwise it would follow from (9) that \( h(N) < h(5^{10} \cdot 7^{10} \cdot 13^{10} \cdot 17^{10} \cdot 19^{10} \cdot 23^{10} \cdot 29^{10} \cdot 31^{10} \cdot 1009^{10} \cdot 100129^{10}) < 2 \) which is impossible since \( N \) is perfect. Likewise, \( p_4 = 13 \) or 17 since \( h(5^{10} \cdot 7^{10} \cdot 11^{10} \cdot 19^{10} \cdot 23^{10} \cdot 29^{10} \cdot 31^{10} \cdot 37^{10} \cdot 1009^{10} \cdot 100129^{10}) < 2 \), and similar arguments show that \( p_5 = 17, 19 \) or 23 and 19 < \( p_6 \) ≤ 31 and \( p_7 \) ≤ 79. From Lemma 1 in [6] we have

\[
\pi \equiv 1 \pmod{12}
\]

and

\[
\text{if } p \equiv 1 \pmod{3} \text{ and } p^a \mid N \text{ then } a \not\equiv 2 \pmod{3}.
\]

It follows that \( p_7 \geq 29 \). For if \( p_7 = 23 \), \( h(N) > h(5^2 \cdot 7^4 \cdot 11^2 \cdot 13 \cdot 17^2 \cdot 19^4 \cdot 23^2) > 2 \).

A more elaborate argument now shows that \( p_4 = 13 \), and the following lemma can then be proved.

**Lemma 4.** If \( 5^b \mid N \) and \( b > 6 \), then \( \sigma(5^b) \) has a prime factor \( Q \geq 100129 \).

With the aid of this lemma we can show that \( p_5 \neq 23 \), and we have

**Proposition 1.** If \( N = \prod_{i=1}^{10} p_i^{a_i} \) is an odd perfect number with \( 3 < p_1 < p_2 < \cdots < p_{10} \), then \( p_1 = 5, p_2 = 7, p_3 = 11, p_4 = 13, p_5 = 17 \) or 19, 19 < \( p_6 \) ≤ 31, and 29 < \( p_7 \) ≤ 79, \( p_9 \) ≥ 1009 and \( p_{10} \) ≥ 100129.

**5. Permissible Exponents.** It can be shown that

\[
\text{if } 19 \mid N, \text{ then } 19^{10} \mid N.
\]

Also,

\[
5^8 \mid N.
\]

For otherwise \( \sigma(5^8) = 19 \cdot 31 \cdot 829 \mid N \), and if \( p_5 = 17 \), then \( h(N) > 2 \) while if \( p_5 = 19 \), then \( h(N) < 2 \).

Similarly, it can be proved that

\[
13^9 \mid N.
\]

Referring to (11), (12), (13), (14) we define in Table I for each (possible) prime factor \( p \) of \( N \) a finite set, \( S(p) \), of “permissible” exponents for \( p \). The entry \( 1^* \) indicates that \( 1 \in S(p) \) if and only if \( p \) might be \( \pi \), while \( 2^* \) indicates that \( 2 \in S(p) \) if and only if \( p \equiv 2 \pmod{3} \). We also tabulate \( m(p) \), the maximum element in \( S(p) \).

**Table I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( p )</th>
<th>( S(p) )</th>
<th>( m(p) )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2, 4, 6, 10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4, 6, 10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2, 4, 6, 8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1, 4, 6, 10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>2, 4, 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>1, 4, 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p_6 ) (≠ 19)</td>
<td>2*, 4, 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p_7 ) (≠ 37)</td>
<td>2*, 4, 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p_8 )</td>
<td>1*, 2*, 4, 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p_9 )</td>
<td>1*, 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p_{10} )</td>
<td>1*, 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6. A Revised Version of Lemma 3. Suppose that $N = \prod_{i=1}^{10} p_i^{a_i}$. With $m(p_i)$ as given in Table 1 we define $b_i = \min(a_i, m(p_i))$; and $c_i = a_i$ if $a_i < m(p_i)$ and $c_i = \infty$, otherwise. Let $B_9$ and $B_{10}$ be lower bounds for $p_9$ and $p_{10}$, respectively. If $M = N/p_9^{a_9}$, we (formally) define $M_L$ and $M_U$ as follows. $M_L = Q_9 Q_{10} \prod_{i=1}^{7} p_i^{b_i}$ where $Q_i = p_i^{b_i}$ if the value of $p_i$, for $i = 9$ or $10$, is specified (known) and $Q_i = 1$ otherwise. $M_U = R_9 R_{10} \prod_{i=1}^{7} p_i^{c_i}$ where $R_i = p_i^{c_i}$ if $p_i$ is specified and $R_i = B_i^{\infty}$ otherwise. From Lemma 3 we have

**Lemma 3***. If $N = Mp_9^{a_9}$ where $p_9 \parallel M$ and $h(M_U) < 2$, then
(i) $G(M_L) - 1 \leq p_8 \leq G(M_U) - 1$ if $a_8 = 1$;
(ii) $G(M_L) - (p_7 + 3)^{-1} \leq p_8 < G(M_U)$ if $a_8 > 1$.
Moreover, if $F(M_L) = G(M_L) - (p_7 + 3)^{-1}$, then
(iii) $G(M_L) - (F(M_L) + 1)^{-1} \leq p_8 < G(M_U)$ if $a_8 > 1$.

7. An Upper Bound For $p_9$. Our immediate objective is to prove that $p_9 < 10^5$. With this in mind assume that $p_9 > 10^5$. Then (see Section 6) we may take $B_9 = 100003$ and $B_{10} = 100129$. Assuming that $p_5 = 19$ a computer program utilizing double-precision arithmetic was written which used Lemma 3* to bound $p_8$ for every possible value of $N$. (Only a finite number of cases, determined by the values of $p_9$ as given in Proposition 1 and the elements of $S(p_9)$ as given in Table 1, had to be considered.) It was found that $p_9 > 10^5$ and $p_9 = 19$ then $11^2 || N$, 5$^{10}7^{10}13^619^329^437^6 | N$ and $p_8 = 41$. Since $F_5(41) = 5 \cdot 579281$ and $h(5^{10}7^{11}13^619^329^437^641^4579281) > 2$, we see that $5 || (a_9 + 1)$. Therefore, if $5^b || N$ it follows from (8), (4) and (6) that $5^b || \sigma(M_8)^{p_9^{a_9}}$ and that $5^{b-2} || (\pi + 1)$. Thus, $\pi > 2 \cdot 5^8 - 1 = 781249$ and, from Lemma 1, $\pi || \sigma(5^b)$. If $p$ is the smallest prime factor of $b + 1$ then, since $F_3(5) = 31$, $F_4(5) = 11 \cdot 71$ and $F_5(5) = 19531$, we see from (4) that $p > 11$. Using (5) it is not difficult to verify that $p_9|| F_p(5)$ for $i \leq 8$. Therefore, (assuming without loss of generality that $\pi = p_9$) $F_p(5) = 5^{p_9}$. According to the table in [7] either $a = 1$, so that $p_9 = F_p(5) \geq F_{11}(5) = 12207031$ or $p_9 > 2^{30}$. It follows that $h(N) < h(5^{11}13^619^329^437^641^412207031^1781249^\infty) < 2$ and this contradiction shows that $p_9 < 10^5$ if $p_9 = 19$. A similar, but lengthier, argument shows that $p_9 < 10^5$ if $p_9 = 13$. Thus, we have

**Lemma 5**. If $N = \prod_{i=1}^{10} p_i^{a_i}$ is odd and perfect and $3 < p_1 < p_2 < \cdots < p_{10}$, then $10^3 < p_9 < 10^5$.

8. A Proof That $p_5 = 19$. The proofs of the following two lemmas are omitted here.

**Lemma 6**. If $17 || N$, then $17^2 || N$ or $17^4 || N$.

**Lemma 7**. If $5 \mid \sigma(N/\sigma(M))$, then $p_{10} \equiv 1 \pmod{5}$. Also, if $5 \mid \sigma(M_i)$ where $i \leq 7$, then $p_7 = 41$ and $p_{10} = F_5(41)/5 = 579281$.

Assume that $p_9 = 17$ and $17^2 || N$. Then $p_8 = 307$ since $\sigma(17^2) = 307$. With $B_9 = 1009$ and $B_{10} = 100129$, Lemma 3* was employed in order to bound $p_8$ for all possible values of $N$. In no case was 307 a permissible value of $p_8$. Therefore, if $p_9 = 17$, then $17^4 || N$. Since it can be shown that $17^4 || N$, we have

**Lemma 8**. $p_5 = 19$. 

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9. The Proof of Our Theorem Concluded. The proofs of the following two lemmas are omitted here.

**Lemma 9.** If \( p_9 = \pi \), then \( p_9 \equiv -1 \pmod{5} \).

**Lemma 10.** If \( 5^b \parallel N \), then \( b = 2, 4 \) or \( 6 \).

With \( p_5 = 19 \), \( B_9 = 1009 \), \( B_{10} = 100129 \) and making use of Lemma 10, Lemma 3* was utilized to determine \( p_9 \) for all possible values of \( N \). The results are given in Table IV. The notation \( p_8^* \) means that \( p_8 \parallel N \).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restrictions on ( N )</th>
<th>( p_8 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( 5^2 \parallel N; 7^{10}11^{12}13^919^{10}23^431^6 \parallel N )</td>
<td>59 or 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( 5^4 \parallel N; 7^{10}11^{8}13^619^{10}23^437^6 \parallel N )</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( 5^211^213 \parallel N; 7^{10}19^{10}23^431^6 \parallel N )</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( 5^11^2 \parallel N; 7^{10}13^619^{10}29^431^6 \parallel N )</td>
<td>37*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( 5^2 \parallel N; 7^{10}11^{8}13^619^{10}23^431^6 \parallel N )</td>
<td>61*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the case \( p_8 = 43 \) a modified version of Lemma 3* was used to bound \( p_9 \). It was found that \( 2647 \leq p_9 \leq 2707 \). Since the only prime in this range congruent to 1 modulo 5 is 2671 and since \( 571 \mid F_5(2671) \) it follows from Lemma 7, (8) and (4) that \( 5^2 \mid \sigma(p_8^{10}) \). This is impossible since \( p_i \equiv 1 \pmod{5^2} \) for \( i < 10 \). Therefore, \( p_8 \neq 43 \).

If \( p_8 = 71 \), then \( p_9 = 1399 \) or 1409. From (10), \( \pi \neq p_9 \). Since \( 211 \mid F_3(71) \) it follows from (8) and Lemma 7 that \( 5^4 \mid \sigma(p_8^{10}) \). Since \( p_i \equiv 1 \pmod{5^2} \) if \( i < 9 \), we see that \( \pi = p_{10} \). Now, \( E(11; 7) = 3 \) and \( F_3(11) = 7 \cdot 19 \) while \( 1723 \mid F_{21}(11) \). \( E(13; 7) = E(1399; 7) = 2 \) and \( E(19; 7) = 6 \). \( E(23; 7) = E(37; 7) = E(1409; 7) = 3 \) while \( 79 \mid F_3(23), 3 \mid F_3(37) \) and \( 283813 \mid F_3(1409) \) (while \( F_3(283813) = 2 \cdot 141907 \)). Also, \( E(71; 7) = 1 \) and \( 883 \mid F_3(71) \). From (4) and (5), \( 7^2 \mid \sigma(p_1^{\pi_1} \cdots p_k^{\pi_k}) \). Therefore, \( 7^9 \mid \sigma(p_8^{10}) \). If \( E(p_8, 7) = 1 \), then from (4), (5), (6) and (7) \( N \) has at least nine prime factors congruent to 1 modulo 7. If \( E(p_{10}, 7) = 3 \) or 6, then (since \( \pi \equiv 1 \pmod{3} \)) \( 3 \parallel N \). Therefore, \( E(p_{10}, 7) = 2 \) and \( 7^3 \mid (\pi + 1) \). It follows that \( \pi > 2 \cdot 7^9 - 1 = 80707213 \), and since \( h(5^47^{10}11^{12}13^919^{10}23^637^671^61399^680707213^6) < 2 \), we see that \( p_8 \neq 71 \).

Since it can also be shown that \( p_8 \neq 37 \) or 59 or 61, the proof of our theorem is now complete.

10. Some Concluding Remarks. This paper is one of many which have appeared in the last ten years which indicate that if an odd perfect number exists then it must be “complicated” (i.e., it must be very large, possess many prime factors (some of which are large), etc.) To the best of my knowledge, the last of these papers which did not make extensive use of a high-speed digital computer was [8]. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that we are near the boundaries of what can be achieved in this area given our present knowledge concerning questions relating to the factors of a cyclotomic polynomial with a prime argument and the present-day “state of the art” in computer hardware and software. Thus, I would be surprised if someone were to...
prove in the next five years or so that every odd perfect number is greater than $10^{500}$,
or has at least 9 prime factors, or has a prime factor which exceeds $10^6$. These results
are all obtainable, I believe, but both the sheer effort and the computer time
required are, in my opinion, prohibitive at present.

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1. P. Hagis, Jr., “Outline of a proof that every odd perfect number has at least eight prime factors,”
2. P. Hagis, Jr., “On the second largest prime divisor of an odd perfect number,” Analytic Number
3. P. Hagis, Jr., “Every odd perfect number not divisible by 3 has at least eleven distinct prime
factors.” (Copy deposited in UMT file.)
6. M. Kishore, “Odd perfect numbers not divisible by 3 are divisible by at least ten distinct primes,”
8. C. Pomerance, “Odd perfect numbers are divisible by at least seven distinct primes,” Acta Arith.,
v. 25, 1974, pp. 265–300.