

## Bertrand's Postulate

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1 February, 2022 (at 20:20)

**Background.** Proofs are from Shoup, from Wikipedia and from my notes.

**The superscript ‘ $\oplus$ ’.** An inequality OTForm

$\forall_{\text{large } n}: f(n) \leq 5^{\oplus} \cdot h(n)$  means

$$\forall \mathbf{U} > 5, \quad \forall_{\text{large } n}: f(n) \leq \mathbf{U} \cdot h(n).$$

Similarly,  $\forall_{\text{large } n}: f(n) \geq [\frac{1}{3}]^{\ominus} \cdot h(n)$  means

$$\forall_{\text{positive } \mathbf{L}} < \frac{1}{3}, \quad \forall_{\text{large } n}: f(n) \geq \mathbf{L} \cdot h(n).$$

Notice that  $\mathbf{U}$  and  $\mathbf{L}$  are quantified *before*  $n$ .

**Clumps.** For  $p$  prime, let  $\text{Divlog}_p(1500)$  denote the maximum natnum  $L$  st.  $p^L \blacktriangleright 1500$ . Another notation for this is  $p^L \blacktriangleright 1500$ . So  $\text{Divlog}_5(1500) = 3$ .

For a non-zero integer  $B$ , the “ $p$ -clump of  $B$ ”,  $\text{Clm}_p(B)$ , is the largest power of  $p$  which divides  $B$ . So  $\text{Clm}_5(1500)$  is 125, and  $\text{Clm}_2(1500) = 4$ .

Evidently  $\text{Clm}_p(B) = p^{\text{Divlog}_p(B)}$ ; and  $B$ ’s clumps multiplied-together make  $B$ .

**1: Lemma.** Fix a prime  $p$  and natnum  $K$ . Then

$$\text{Divlog}_p(K!) = \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \left\lfloor \frac{K}{p^j} \right\rfloor. \quad (\text{Exercise}) \quad \blacklozenge$$

**2: Prop’n.**  $\forall \alpha \in \mathbb{R}: [2\alpha] - 2[\alpha]$  is zero or one.  $\blacklozenge$

We denote the set of prime numbers by  $\mathbb{P}$ . Below, “ $p$ ” ranges over the prime numbers. All following definitions are for real  $x$ , although usually  $x$  will be an integer.

First the “Product Of Primes”,

$$\text{PrOP}(N) := \prod_{p: p \leq x} p.$$

Its logarithm is the famous **Chebyshev theta fnc**:

$$\vartheta(x) := \log(\text{PrOP}(N)) = \sum_{p: p \leq x} \log(p).$$

Generalizing PrOP. When  $S$  is a set of reals, let  $\text{PrOP}(S)$  mean the product of the primes in  $S$ .

**3: PowFour Lemma.** For each  $x \geq 1$ :  $\text{PrOP}(x) < 4^x$ .  
in other words:  $\vartheta(x) < \log(4) \cdot x$ ,  $\blacklozenge$

**Proof.** WLOG,  $x$  is an integer  $N$ .

$$\begin{array}{ll} \text{CASE: } N = 1 & : \quad \text{PrOP}(1) = 1 < 4^1. \\ \text{CASE: } N = 2 & : \quad \text{PrOP}(2) = 2 < 4^2. \\ \text{CASE: } N > 2 \text{ and } N \text{ is even} & \end{array}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{PrOP}(N) &= \text{PrOP}(N-1), \text{ since } N \text{ isn't prime,} \\ &< 4^{N-1}, \text{ by induction,} \end{aligned}$$

which is less than  $4^N$ .

$(N > 2 \text{ and } N \text{ is odd})$  Write  $N := [2H + 1]$ . Induction gives (since  $H+1 < N$ ) that

$$\text{PrOP}([1 \dots H+1]) < 4^{H+1},$$

so our goal is to show that

$$3': \quad \text{PrOP}((H+1 \dots N]) \stackrel{?}{\leq} 4^H.$$

Flipping a coin  $N$  times, the number of coin-flip sequences is (letting  $j, k$  range over  $\mathbb{N}$ )

$$\begin{aligned} [1 + 1]^N &= \sum_{j+k=N} \binom{N}{j, k} \\ &\geq \binom{N}{H, H+1} + \binom{N}{H+1, H} = 2 \cdot \binom{N}{H}. \end{aligned}$$

Divide by 2, then exchange sides, to get  $\binom{N}{H} \leq 4^H$ .

Each prime in  $(H+1 \dots N]$  divides  $\binom{N}{H}$ , so

$$\text{PrOP}((H+1 \dots N]) \blacktriangleright \binom{N}{H}.$$

Since  $\binom{N}{H}$  is positive,  $\text{PrOP}((H+1 \dots N]) \leq \binom{N}{H}$ .  
Hence (??').  $\blacklozenge$

## Prime-number Thm and related results

Use  $\pi(x)$  for the number of primes in  $[1, x]$ . We’ll estimate it in terms of  $\frac{x}{\log(x)}$ . Differentiating this latter gives:

4: The fnc  $x \mapsto \frac{x}{\log(x)}$  is strictly-increasing on the  $[e, \infty)$  interval.

**5: Chebyshev's Theorem.** For each posint  $n \geq 2$ :

$$5a: \quad \pi(n) \geq \frac{\log(2)}{2} \cdot \frac{n}{\log(n)}.$$

Conversely, for each real  $U > \log(4)$ :

$$5b: \quad \forall_{\text{large } x} : \quad \pi(x) \leq U \cdot \frac{x}{\log(x)}. \quad \diamond$$

**Proof of (5a).** Sound-bite: *Produce a big integer  $B$  all of whose clumps are small. Since the clumps multiply to  $B$ , and they are small, there must be many clumps. Hence many small primes divide  $B$ . So many small primes exist. Thus  $\pi(x)$  must be big.*

**Even  $n$ :** Write  $2N := n$ . Let  $B := \binom{2N}{N}$ . Easily

$$B \geq 2^N.$$

Let  $\mathbf{T}$  denote the number of distinct primes which divide  $B$ ; each such  $p \leq 2N$ , so

$$6: \quad \pi(2N) \geq \mathbf{T}.$$

**Lower-binding  $\mathbf{T}$ .** Evidently  $\text{Divlog}_p\left(\binom{2N}{N}\right)$  equals  $\text{Divlog}_p([2N]!) - 2 \cdot \text{Divlog}_p(N!)$ . By (1), then,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Divlog}_p(B) &= \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \left\lfloor \frac{2N}{p^j} \right\rfloor - 2 \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \left\lfloor \frac{N}{p^j} \right\rfloor \\ &= \sum_{j=1}^L \left[ \left\lfloor \frac{2N}{p^j} \right\rfloor - 2 \left\lfloor \frac{N}{p^j} \right\rfloor \right], \end{aligned}$$

where  $L$  is  $\lfloor \log_p(2N) \rfloor$ . By (2), each summand is either 1 or 0. Thus  $\log_p(2N) \geq \text{Divlog}_p(B)$ . So

$$7: \quad 2N \geq \text{Clm}_p(B),$$

since  $p^{\text{Divlog}_p(B)}$  is  $\text{Clm}_p(B)$ . Multiplying the  $B$ -clumps together gives  $B$ , so  $[2N]^{\mathbf{T}} \geq B$ . Hence  $[2N]^{\mathbf{T}} \geq 2^N$ . Consequently  $\mathbf{T} \cdot \log(2N) \geq \log(2) \cdot N$ . Dividing yields (note  $N > 0$ , so  $\log(2N) \neq 0$ )

$$\mathbf{T} \geq \frac{\log(2)}{2} \cdot \frac{2N}{\log(2N)} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \frac{\log(2)}{2} \cdot \frac{n}{\log(n)}.$$

Courtesy (6), this is the desired (5a).

**Odd  $n \geq 3$ :** Since  $n+1$  is even, thus not prime,

$$\pi(n) = \pi(n+1) \geq \frac{\log(2)}{2} \cdot \frac{n+1}{\log(n+1)}.$$

Now use (4). ♦

**Proof of (5b).** We will use Thm 10, below, being careful not to argue circularly.

By (10), there is a real,  $1^+$ , and  $x_0$  so that  $\forall x \geq x_0$ :  $\pi(x) \leq 1^+ \cdot \frac{\vartheta(x)}{\log(x)}$ . By the PowFour Lemma, then,

$$\pi(x) \leq 1^+ \cdot \log(4) \cdot \frac{x}{\log(x)}. \quad \diamond$$

Chebyshev's thm gives a growth rate on the  $n^{\text{th}}$ -prime  $p_n$ .

**8: Theorem.** Fix posreals  $L \leq U$  such that  $\forall_{\text{large } \ell}$ :

$$L^{\ominus} \cdot \frac{\ell}{\log(\ell)} \stackrel{1^+}{\leq} \pi(\ell) \stackrel{2^+}{\leq} U^{\oplus} \cdot \frac{\ell}{\log(\ell)}.$$

Then  $\forall_{\text{large } n}$ :

$$\left[\frac{1}{U}\right]^{\ominus} \cdot n \log(n) \stackrel{1^+}{\leq} p_n \stackrel{2^+}{\leq} \left[\frac{1}{L}\right]^{\oplus} \cdot n \log(n). \quad \diamond$$

**Pf of (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ).** Fix a  $U > U$  with  $\forall_{\text{large } \ell} : \pi(\ell) \leq U \cdot \frac{\ell}{\log(\ell)}$ . Taking  $n$  sufficiently large, then,

$$n \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \pi(p_n) \leq U \cdot \frac{p_n}{\log(p_n)}.$$

Cross-multiplying gives  $\frac{1}{U} \cdot n \log(p_n) \leq p_n$ . But  $n \leq p_n$ , so  $\log(n) \leq \log(p_n)$ . Thus

$$\frac{1}{U} \cdot n \log(n) \leq p_n. \quad \diamond$$

**Proof of (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ).** Suppose  $\forall_{\text{large } \ell} : \pi(\ell) \geq \frac{1}{5} \cdot \frac{\ell}{\log(\ell)}$ . We want to establish (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ), with the constant being  $5^{\oplus}$ .

Define  $K_n$  by  $p_n = K_n \cdot n \log(n)$ . Let  $S$  be the set of  $n$  with  $\boxed{K_n \geq 5.001}$ . FTSOC, suppose  $S$  is infinite.

For large  $n \in S$ , then,  $\frac{1}{5} \cdot \frac{p_n}{\log(p_n)} \leq \pi(p_n) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} n$ . So

$$\frac{1}{5} \leq \frac{\log(K_n \cdot n \log(n))}{K_n \log(n)} = \frac{\log(K_n \log(n))}{K_n \log(n)} + \frac{1}{K_n}.$$

Note that  $[K_n \log(n)] \rightarrow \infty$ , as  $n \rightarrow \infty$ , since  $\{K_n\}_1^{\infty}$  is bndd below, and  $\log(n) \rightarrow \infty$ . Apply to each side  $\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty}$ , but only for  $n \in S$ , to obtain that

$$\frac{1}{5} \leq \limsup_{\substack{n \rightarrow \infty \\ n \in S}} \frac{1}{K_n} \stackrel{\text{note}}{\leq} \frac{1}{5.001}.$$

This contradiction shows  $S$  must have been *finite*! ♦

**9: Lemma.** Fix a positive  $\delta < 1$ . Then  $x^\delta = o(\frac{x}{\log(x)})$ .  
Consequently,

$$9*: \quad x^\delta = o(\pi(x)). \quad \diamond$$

**Proof.** Use l'Hôpital's rule. For (9\*), note that (5a) implies  $\frac{x}{\log(x)} = O(\pi(x))$ .  $\blacklozenge$

**10: Asymptotic  $\pi, \vartheta$  Thm.** Indeed,

$$.1: \quad \pi(x) \geq \frac{\vartheta(x)}{\log(x)}, \quad \text{for all } x > 1.$$

$$.2: \quad \pi(x) \asymp \frac{\vartheta(x)}{\log(x)}, \quad \text{as } x \rightarrow \infty. \quad \diamond$$

**Proof.** When  $p \leq x$ , necessarily  $\log(p) \leq \log(x)$ . So

$$\vartheta(x) \leq \sum_{p \in (1..x]} \log(x) = \log(x) \cdot \pi(x).$$

Because of (10.1), ISTFix a posreal  $\varepsilon$  and show

$$[1 + \varepsilon] \frac{\vartheta(x)}{\log(x)} \stackrel{?}{\geq} [1 - o(1)] \cdot \pi(x),$$

to establish the (10.2) asymptotics. Rewritten, our goal is

$$[1 + \varepsilon] \cdot \frac{\vartheta(x)}{\log(x)} \stackrel{?}{\geq} \pi(x) - o(\pi(x)).$$

So fix a positive  $\delta < 1$  and set  $\mathbf{L} := x^\delta$ . Thus

$$\vartheta(x) \geq \sum_{p \in (\mathbf{L}..x]} \log(\mathbf{L}) = \delta \log(x) \cdot [\pi(x) - \pi(\mathbf{L})].$$

Hence  $\frac{1}{\delta} \cdot \frac{\vartheta(x)}{\log(x)} \geq \pi(x) - \pi(\mathbf{L})$ . Therefore, we need but show that  $\pi(\mathbf{L})$  is  $o(\pi(x))$ . But  $\pi(\mathbf{L}) \leq \mathbf{L} = x^\delta$ . And (9\*) is our knight in shining armor.  $\blacklozenge$

**11: Coro.** There is a positive constant  $C$  so that

$$\forall_{\text{large } n}: \quad C \cdot n \leq \vartheta(n). \quad \diamond$$

**Proof.** Combine (10.2) with (5a).  $\blacklozenge$

The  $n^{\text{th}}$  **harmonic number** is  $H_n := \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{1}{j}$ , for  $n$  a posint. Easily,

$$\dagger: \quad \forall n: \quad H_n \geq H_{n-1} \geq \log(n) \geq H_n - 1.$$

$$\ddagger: \quad \forall x > 0: \quad x \geq \log(1 + x).$$

Euler proved that  $\sum_p \frac{1}{p} = \infty$ . His argument essentially shows (12), below.

**12: Thm.** For  $N$  a posint:  $\sum_{p: p \leq N} \frac{1}{p-1} \geq \log \log(N)$ .

Hence,  $\sum_{p \leq N} \frac{1}{p} \geq \log \log(N) - O(1)$ .  $\diamond$

**Proof.** Each  $n \leq N$  is some product of  $p_j^{e_j}$ , over primes  $p_j \leq N$ . So  $\frac{1}{n}$  has form  $\prod_{p \leq N} \frac{1}{p^{e(n)}}$ . Thus

$$H_N \leq \prod_{p \leq N} \left[ 1 + \frac{1}{p} + \frac{1}{p^2} + \frac{1}{p^3} + \dots \right].$$

And  $1 + \frac{1}{p} + \frac{1}{p^2} + \dots = \frac{1}{1 - \frac{1}{p}} = 1 + \frac{1}{p-1}$ . By ( $\dagger$ ), then,  $\log \log(N) \leq \log(H_N) \leq \sum_{p \leq N} \log(1 + \frac{1}{p-1})$ . Hence

$$\log \log(N) \stackrel{\text{by } (\ddagger)}{\leq} \sum_{p \leq N} \left[ \frac{1}{p-1} \right]. \quad \blacklozenge$$

### Shoup's proof of Bertrand's postulate

Let  $\mathbf{T}_n := \pi(2n) - \pi(n)$ . The PNT suggests that  $\mathbf{T}_n \approx \frac{n}{\log(2n)}$ . We will show this weaker stmt.

**13: Bertrand's Density Postulate.** For each posint  $N$ :

$$13\dagger: \quad \mathbf{T}_N \geq \frac{1}{3} \cdot \frac{N}{\log(2N)}. \quad \diamond$$

**Rem.** It will suffice to produce a constant  $\mathbf{U} > \frac{1}{3}$  st.

$$13\dagger: \quad \mathbf{T}_N \geq \mathbf{U} \cdot \frac{N}{\log(2N)} - o\left(\frac{N}{\log(2N)}\right),$$

then verify (13 $\dagger$ ) for finitely many values of  $N$ .  $\square$

**Proof.** We use notation from (5a) and its proof.

Each prime  $p \nmid B$  produces a clump  $\text{Clm}_p := p^{\text{Divlog}_p(B)}$ . Given an interval  $J \subset (1..2N]$ , let  $\bar{J}$  be

the product of the  $p$ -clumps over all  $p \in J$ . We will show that (*proof is currently omitted*)

$$\begin{aligned} \overline{(1 \dots \sqrt{2N})} &\leq [2N]^{\sqrt{2N}}; \\ \overline{(\sqrt{2N} \dots \frac{2}{3}N)} &\leq 4^{\lceil \frac{2}{3}N \rceil}; \\ \overline{(\frac{2}{3}N \dots N)} &= 1; \\ \overline{(N \dots 2N)} &\leq [2N]^{\mathbf{T}}. \end{aligned}$$

But  $B$  is the product of its clumps, so

$$[2N]^{\mathbf{T}} \cdot [2N]^{\sqrt{2N}} \cdot 4^{\lceil \frac{2}{3}N \rceil} \geq B.$$

A simple induction shows that  $\binom{2n}{n} \geq \frac{1}{2n} \cdot 4^n$ . Thus

$$[2N]^{\mathbf{T}+1+\sqrt{2N}} \geq 4^{\lceil \frac{1}{3}N \rceil}.$$

So  $[\mathbf{T} + 1 + \sqrt{2N}] \cdot \log(2N) \geq \log(4) \cdot \frac{1}{3}N$ . Thus

$$\mathbf{T} \geq \log(4) \cdot \frac{1}{3} \frac{N}{\log(2N)} - [1 + \sqrt{2N}].$$

And this is what we needed in (13†). ♦

### Logarithmic Integral

Following Shoup, define<sup>♥1</sup>

$$\text{Li}(x) := \int_2^x \frac{1}{\log(t)} dt.$$

Let's use L'Hôpital's rule to show that

$$14: \quad \text{Li}(x) \asymp \frac{x}{\log(x)}.$$

Abbrev  $\log(x)$  by  $L$ . So  $\frac{d}{dx}(\frac{x}{L}) = \frac{1 \cdot L - x \cdot \frac{1}{L}}{L^2} = \frac{1}{L} - \frac{1}{L^2}$ . Therefore

$$\frac{[\frac{x}{L}]'}{[\text{Li}(x)]'} = \frac{\frac{1}{L} - \frac{1}{L^2}}{\frac{1}{L}} = 1 - \frac{1}{L}.$$

And  $1 - \frac{1}{L} \rightarrow 0$  as  $x \rightarrow \infty$ . Hence l'Hôpital's yields (14).

<sup>♥1</sup>Wikipedia calls this version the “Offset logarithmic integral”, and uses  $\int_0^\infty$  for its “logarithmic integral”.

### Erdős' proof of Bertrand's postulate

Assume there is a CEX: an integer  $N \geq 2$  such that there is no prime number in  $(N \dots 2N)$ .

If  $N \in [2 \dots 2048)$ , then one of the prime numbers 3, 5, 7, 13, 23, 43, 83, 163, 317, 631, 1259 and 2503 (each being less than twice its predecessor), call it  $p$ , will satisfy  $N < p < 2N$ . Therefore WLOG  $N \geq 2048$ .

Proof, when  $N \geq 2048$ . Note that

$$4^N = [1 + 1]^{2N} = \sum_{k=0}^{2N} \binom{2N}{k}.$$

Since  $\binom{2N}{N}$  is the largest term in the sum, we have that

$$\frac{4^N}{2N+1} \leq \binom{2N}{N}.$$

Define  $\mathcal{R} := \mathcal{R}(p, N)$  to be highest integer  $x$ , such that  $p^x$  divides  $\binom{2N}{N}$ . Applying (1) to  $K := 2N$  and  $K := N$  yields

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{R} &= \text{Divlog}_p([2N]!) - 2 \cdot \text{Divlog}_p(N!) \\ &= \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \left\lfloor \frac{2N}{p^j} \right\rfloor - 2 \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \left\lfloor \frac{N}{p^j} \right\rfloor \\ &= \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \left[ \left\lfloor \frac{2N}{p^j} \right\rfloor - 2 \left\lfloor \frac{N}{p^j} \right\rfloor \right]. \end{aligned}$$

But each term

$$\left\lfloor \frac{2N}{p^j} \right\rfloor - 2 \left\lfloor \frac{N}{p^j} \right\rfloor$$

can either be 0 (when  $\frac{N}{p^j} \bmod 1 < \frac{1}{2}$ ) or 1 (when  $\frac{N}{p^j} \bmod 1 \geq \frac{1}{2}$ ). Furthermore, all terms with

$$j > \left\lfloor \frac{\log(2N)}{\log(p)} \right\rfloor$$

are 0. Therefore

$$\mathcal{R} \leq \left\lfloor \frac{\log(2N)}{\log(p)} \right\rfloor,$$

and we get:

$$\begin{aligned} p^{\mathcal{R}} &= \exp(\mathcal{R} \cdot \log(p)) \\ &\leq \exp\left(\left\lfloor \frac{\log(2N)}{\log(p)} \right\rfloor \log(p)\right) \leq 2N. \end{aligned}$$

For each  $p > \sqrt{2N}$ , necessarily

$$\left\lfloor \frac{\log(2N)}{\log(p)} \right\rfloor \leq 1$$

or

$$\mathcal{R} = \left\lfloor \frac{2N}{p} \right\rfloor - 2 \left\lfloor \frac{N}{p} \right\rfloor.$$

Remark that  $\binom{2N}{N}$  has no prime factors  $p$  such that:

- $2N < p$ , because  $2N$  is the largest factor.
- $N < p \leq 2N$ , because we assumed there is no such prime number.
- $\frac{2N}{3} < p \leq N$ , because (since  $N \geq 5$ ) which gives us

$$\mathcal{R} = \left\lfloor \frac{2N}{p} \right\rfloor - 2 \left\lfloor \frac{N}{p} \right\rfloor = 2 - 2 = 0.$$

Each prime factor of  $\binom{2N}{N}$  is therefore not larger than  $\frac{2N}{3}$ .

Note that  $\binom{2N}{N}$  has at most one factor of every prime  $p > \sqrt{2N}$ . As  $p^{\mathcal{R}} \leq 2N$ , the product of  $p^{\mathcal{R}}$  over all other primes is at most  $[2N]^{\sqrt{2N}}$ . Since  $\binom{2N}{N}$  is the product of  $p^{\mathcal{R}}$  over all primes  $p$ , we get that

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{4^N}{2N+1} &\leq \binom{2N}{N} \leq [2N]^{\sqrt{2N}} \cdot \prod_{p \in \mathbb{P}}^{\frac{2N}{3}} p \\ &= [2N]^{\sqrt{2N}} \cdot e^{\vartheta(\frac{2N}{3})}. \end{aligned}$$

Using our lemma,  $\vartheta(N) < N \cdot \log(4)$ :

$$\frac{4^N}{2N+1} \leq [2N]^{\sqrt{2N}} \cdot 4^{\frac{2N}{3}}$$

Since we have  $[2N+1] < [2N]^2$ , automatically

$$4^{\frac{N}{3}} \leq [2N]^{2+\sqrt{2N}}.$$

Also  $2 \leq \frac{\sqrt{2N}}{3}$  (since  $N \geq 18$ ): Consequently,

$$4^{\frac{N}{3}} \leq [2N]^{\frac{4}{3}\sqrt{2N}}.$$

Taking logarithms produces

$$\sqrt{2N} \cdot \log(2) \leq 4 \cdot \log(2N).$$

Substituting  $2^{2t}$  for  $2N$ :

$$\frac{2^t}{t} \leq 8.$$

This gives us  $t < 6$  and the contradiction that

$$N = \frac{2^{2t}}{2} < \frac{2^{2 \cdot 6}}{2} \stackrel{\text{note}}{=} 2048.$$

Thus no counterexample to the postulate is possible.  $\blacklozenge$

Filename: Problems/NumberTheory/bertrand\_postulate.tex  
As of: Wednesday 09Sep2009. Typeset: 1Feb2022 at 20:20.