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SOME NEW RESULTS ON ODD PERFECT NUMBERS

G. G. DANDAPAT, JOHN L. HUNSUCKER AND CARL POMERANCE

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If m is a multiply perfect number ($\sigma(m) = tm$ for some integer t), we ask if there is a prime p with $m = p^a n$, $(p^a, n) = 1$, $\sigma(n) = p^a$, and $\sigma(p^a) = tn$. We prove that the only multiply perfect numbers with this property are the even perfect numbers and 672. Hence we settle a problem raised by Suryanarayana who asked if odd perfect numbers necessarily had such a prime factor. The methods of the proof allow us also to say something about odd solutions to the equation $\sigma(\sigma(n)) = 2n$.

1. Introduction. In this paper we answer a question on odd perfect numbers posed by Suryanarayana [17]. It is known that if m is an odd perfect number, then $m = p^a k^2$ where p is a prime, $p \nmid k$, and $p \equiv a \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$. Suryanarayana asked if it necessarily followed that

$$(1) \quad \sigma(k^2) = p^a, \quad \sigma(p^a) = 2k^2.$$

Here, σ is the sum of the divisors function. We answer this question in the negative by showing that no odd perfect number satisfies (1).

We actually consider a more general question. If m is multiply perfect ($\sigma(m) = tm$ for some integer t), we say m has *property S* if there is a prime p with $m = p^a n$, $(p^a, n) = 1$, and the equations

$$(2) \quad \sigma(n) = p^a, \quad \sigma(p^a) = tn$$

hold. Note that if n, p, a, t is a solution of (2) with p prime, then $1 = (p^a, \sigma(p^a)) = (p^a, n)$, so that $\sigma(p^a n) = tp^a n$; that is $p^a n$ is multiply perfect. Hence the multiply perfect numbers with property *S* are in one-to-one correspondence with the solutions of (2). We shall prove:

THEOREM 1. *If p is a prime, n, a, t are positive integers, and (2) holds, then either*

$$(3) \quad n = 21, \quad p = 2, \quad a = 5, \quad t = 3$$

or

$$(4) \quad n = 2^k, \quad p = 2^{k+1} - 1, \quad a = 1, \quad t = 2.$$

COROLLARY. *If m is a multiply perfect number with property*

S , then $m = 672$ or m is an even perfect number. In particular, no odd perfect number has property S .

Write the odd perfect number $m = p^a k^2$ as a product of primes $p^a p_1^{2a_1} \dots p_\nu^{2a_\nu}$. (Note that Pomerance [12] and Robbins [14] have shown that $\nu \geq 6$.) Let $N(m)$ be the number of subscripts i for which there is a subscript j such that $(\sigma(p_i^{2a_i} p_j^{2a_j}), p_i p_j) > 1$. Then $0 \leq N(m) \leq \nu$. It is not difficult to see that Suryanarayana's equations (1) are equivalent to the odd perfect m satisfying $N(m) = 0$. Hence the above corollary implies $N(m) > 0$. We show however that $N(m)$ is not even close to 0, but more nearly ν .

THEOREM 2. *If m is an odd perfect number, then*

$$(5) \quad \nu + 1 - [\log(\nu + 1)/\log 2] \leq N(m) \leq \nu.$$

Several authors (Kanold [8], Niederreiter [11], Suryanarayana [16], [18]) have considered the equation

$$(6) \quad \sigma(\sigma(n)) = 2n,$$

calling the solutions n super perfect. The even super perfects have been completely classified, but it is not known if any odd super perfects exist. The methods we develop to consider (1), (2), and (5) allow us also to get some results on odd solutions of (6). We shall prove:

THEOREM 3. *If n is an odd super perfect number, then neither n nor $\sigma(n)$ is a prime power and either n or $\sigma(n)$ is divisible by at least 3 distinct primes.*

Note that Suryanarayana [18] has already shown that n is not a prime power, but we give a new proof here for completeness. We (the second and third authors) have actually been able to prove much more than Theorem 3, but we do not give the details in this paper. (We have proved that if n is an odd super perfect number, then $n > 7 \cdot 10^{24}$, $\omega(n\sigma(n)) \geq 5$, and $\omega(n) + \omega(\sigma(n)) \geq 7$. Here $\omega(n)$ is the number of distinct prime factors of n .)

The main tool of this paper (Theorem A in §2) has the remarkable distinction of having been proved independently nine times.

In the research for this paper, the first author worked separately from the other authors.

2. Preliminaries. If x, y are integers, we shall write $x \parallel y$ if $x \mid y$ and $(x, y/x) = 1$. If p, q are distinct primes, we shall denote by $\text{ord}_q(p)$ the exponent p belongs to mod q , that is, the smallest

natural number d for which $p^d \equiv 1 \pmod{q}$. We denote by $a_q(p)$ the integer e such that $q^e \parallel p^d - 1$, where $d = \text{ord}_q(p)$. Clearly $\text{ord}_q(p) \mid q - 1$ and $a_q(p) \geq 1$.

From Theorems 94 and 95 in Nagell [10] and the fact that $\sigma(p^x) = (p^{x+1} - 1)/(p - 1)$, we have:

LEMMA 1. *Suppose p, q are distinct primes with $q \neq 2$ and b, c are natural numbers. Then*

- (i) *if $p \equiv 1 \pmod{q}$, then $q^b \parallel \sigma(p^c)$ if and only if $q^b \parallel c + 1$,*
- (ii) *if $p \not\equiv 1 \pmod{q}$, then $q^b \parallel \sigma(p^c)$ if and only if $b \geq a_q(p)$, $\text{ord}_q(p) \mid c + 1$, and $q^{b-a_q(p)} \parallel c + 1$.*

LEMMA 2. *Suppose p, q are distinct primes, x, y, b, c are natural numbers, $\sigma(q^x) = p^y$ and $q^b \parallel \sigma(p^c)$. Assume $q \neq 2$. Then*

- (i) *if $p \equiv 1 \pmod{q}$, then $q^b \parallel c + 1$,*
- (ii) *if $p \not\equiv 1 \pmod{q}$, then $\text{ord}_q(p) \mid c + 1$ and $q^{b-1} \parallel c + 1$.*

Proof. Now (i) follows from (i) of Lemma 1. Also (ii) will follow from (ii) of Lemma 1 provided we show $a_q(p) = 1$. Now $p^y = \sigma(q^x) = 1 + q + \dots + q^x$, so that $p^y - 1 \equiv q \pmod{q^2}$. Then since $p \not\equiv 1 \pmod{q}$, we have $q \parallel (p^y - 1)/(p - 1) = \sigma(p^{y-1})$. Lemma 1 now implies $a_q(p) = 1$.

There is a well-known result about expressions of the form $(a^b - 1)/(a - 1)$ (see Bang [2], Zsigmondy [20], Sylvester [19], Birkhoff and Vandiver [3], Dickson [4], Kanold [7], Artin [1], Leopoldt [9], Richter [13]), which implies the following:

THEOREM A. *If p is a prime, x is a natural number, and $1 < d \mid x + 1$, then there is a prime $q \mid \sigma(p^x)$ with $\text{ord}_q(p) = d$, unless*

- (i) *$p = 2$ and $d = 6$,*
- (ii) *p is a Mersenne prime (that is, of the form $2^k - 1$) and $d = 2$.*

3. The main results. In this section we prove Theorems 1 and 2.

Proof of Theorem 1. We first consider the case $p = 2$. From the equation $\sigma(n) = 2^a$ and Theorem A, we see that n is a product of distinct Mersenne primes (cf. Sierpiński [15]); say $n = p_1 p_2 \dots p_s$ where each $p_i = 2^{k_i} - 1$, k_i is prime and $k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_s$. Then $a = \sum k_i$. Now $tn = \sigma(2^a) = 2^{1+\sum k_i} - 1$. Hence for $1 \leq j \leq s$, we have $2^{k_j} - 1 \mid 2^{1+\sum k_i} - 1$, so that $k_j \mid \sum k_i$. Since the k_j are distinct primes, we have

$$(7) \quad \prod_{i=1}^s k_i \mid 1 + \sum_{i=1}^s k_i .$$

Then $s \geq 2$. Now the expression $\prod k_i - 1 - \sum k_i$ increases separately in each of the s "variables" k_1, k_2, \dots, k_s . If $s = 2, k_1 = 2, k_2 = 3$, we have $2 \cdot 3 \mid 1 + 2 + 3$. This gives the solution (3). If $s = 2$ and $k_2 \geq 5$, then $k_1 k_2 - 1 - k_1 - k_2 \geq 2 \cdot 5 - 1 - 2 - 5 > 0$, so that (7) fails. Also if $s \geq 3, \prod k_i - 1 - \sum k_i > 2^s - 1 - 2s > 0$, so again (7) fails.

We now consider the case $p > 2$. Since $\sigma(n) = p^a$ is odd, we have $n = 2^k p_1^{2a_1} \dots p_r^{2a_r}$ where $k \geq 0, r \geq 0$, and p_1, \dots, p_r distinct odd primes. Suppose $r = 0$, so that $n = 2^k$. Then $\sigma(n) = 2^{k+1} - 1 = p^a$. Suppose $a > 1$. By Theorem A, there is a prime $q \mid \sigma(p^{2a-1})$ with $\text{ord}_q(p) = 2a$. Then $q \mid (p^{2a} - 1)/(p^a - 1) = p^a + 1 = 2^{k+1}$, an impossibility since q is odd (cf. Gerono [6]). Hence $a = 1$ and we have solution (4). Thus we may assume $r \geq 1$. Now for $1 \leq i \leq r$, we have $\sigma(p_i^{2a_i}) \mid p^a$ and $p_i^{2a_i} \mid \sigma(p^a)$. Lemma 2 then implies $p_i \mid a + 1$, so that $p_1 p_2 \dots p_r \mid a + 1$. Theorem A implies there is a prime $q \mid \sigma(p^a)$ with $\text{ord}_q(p) = p_1 p_2 \dots p_r$. Then $q \neq 2, p_1, \dots, p_r$, and since $q \mid tn$, we have $q \mid t$. Hence

$$\begin{aligned} p_1 p_2 \dots p_r < q \leq t &= \frac{\sigma(p^a)}{n} = \frac{\sigma(p^a)}{p^a} \cdot \frac{\sigma(n)}{n} \\ &= \frac{p^{a+1} - 1}{p^a(p - 1)} \cdot \frac{2^{k+1} - 1}{2^k} \cdot \prod \frac{p_i^{2a_i+1} - 1}{p_i^{2a_i}(p_i - 1)} \\ &< \frac{p}{p - 1} \cdot 2 \cdot \prod \frac{p_i}{p_i - 1} , \end{aligned}$$

so that

$$1 < \frac{2p}{p - 1} \cdot \prod \frac{1}{(p_i - 1)} \leq \frac{2p}{(p - 1)(p_1 - 1)} \leq \frac{2 \cdot 3}{2 \cdot 4} < 1 ,$$

a contradiction.

Proof of Theorem 2. If i is such that $1 \leq i \leq \nu$ and $(\sigma(p_i^{2a_i} p_j^{2a_j}), p_i p_j) = 1$ for all $j, 1 \leq j \leq \nu$, then $p_i^{2a_i} \mid \sigma(p^a)$ and $\sigma(p_i^{2a_i}) \mid p^a$. Let Ω be the set of such subscripts i , and let ω be the cardinality of Ω . Lemma 2 implies that $\prod_{i \in \Omega} p_i \mid a + 1$. Since also $2 \mid a + 1$, we have at least $2^{\omega+1} - 1$ divisors d of $a + 1$ with $d > 1$. Since p is not a Mersenne prime (we have $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$), Theorem A implies for each such d , there is a prime $r = r_d \mid \sigma(p^a)$ with $\text{ord}_r(p) = d$. Then each r_d is odd, and since m is perfect, we have $r_d \in \{p_1, p_2, \dots, p_\nu\}$. Hence $2^{\omega+1} - 1 \leq \nu$, so that $\omega \leq [\log(\nu + 1)/\log 2] - 1$.

4. Super perfect numbers.

LEMMA 3. Let n be an odd super perfect number. Then

(i) n is a square,

(ii) $\sigma(n)$ is odd,

(iii) the prime factorization of $\sigma(n)$ is $p^a p_1^{2a_1} \cdots p_\nu^{2a_\nu}$ where $p \equiv a \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $\nu \geq 0$.

Proof. Kanold [8] proved (i) and (ii). Then $m = \sigma(n)$ is an odd integer for which $2 \parallel \sigma(m)$. Then such an odd integer must have the prime factorization indicated in (iii) (cf. Euler [5]).

Proof of Theorem 3. Suppose $\sigma(n)$ is the prime power p^a . Then $\sigma(p^a) = \sigma(\sigma(n)) = 2n$, so that Theorem 1 implies $p^a n$ is even, contradicting Lemma 3.

Suppose n is the prime power q^b . Then, in the notation of Lemma 3, we have just proved that $\nu \geq 1$, so that for $1 \leq i \leq \nu$ we have $p_i^{2a_i} \mid \sigma(q^b)$ and $\sigma(p_i^{2a_i}) \mid q^b$. Say $r = \max\{p_1, p_2, \dots, p_\nu\}$. Now Lemma 2 implies either $r^2 \mid b+1$ or $r \cdot \text{ord}_r(q) \mid b+1$ in which case $\text{ord}_r(q) > 1$. In the first case $b+1$ has the 2 divisors r and r^2 which are multiples of r . In the second case, $b+1$ has the 2 divisors r and $r \cdot \text{ord}_r(q)$ which are multiples of r . Since q is odd, in either case Theorem A implies there are 2 distinct primes dividing $\sigma(q^b)$ which are $1 \pmod{r}$. This contradicts (iii) of Lemma 3 and the choice of r .

Suppose both n and $\sigma(n)$ are divisible by precisely 2 distinct primes. Now if $(n, \sigma(n)) = 1$, then $n\sigma(n)$ is divisible by precisely 4 distinct primes and $\sigma(n\sigma(n)) = \sigma(n)\sigma(\sigma(n)) = 2n\sigma(n)$. Then Lemma 3 implies $n\sigma(n)$ is an odd perfect number. This contradicts the previously stated result ([12], [14]) that every odd perfect number is divisible by at least 7 distinct primes. Hence $(n, \sigma(n)) > 1$. Hence from Lemma 3 we have the prime factorizations

$$\begin{aligned} n &= q^{2b} r^{2c} \\ \sigma(n) &= q^\alpha s^\beta. \end{aligned}$$

Now $\sigma(q^{2b}) \mid s^\beta$ and since $n \mid \sigma(\sigma(n))$, we have $q^{2b} \mid \sigma(s^\beta)$. Then, as in the above paragraph, there are at least 2 distinct primes dividing $\sigma(s^\beta)$ which are $1 \pmod{q}$. This contradicts $\sigma(s^\beta) \mid 2n$.

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Norman Larrabee Alling, <i>On Cauchy's theorem for real algebraic curves with boundary</i>	315
Daniel D. Anderson, <i>A remark on the lattice of ideals of a Prüfer domain</i>	323
Dennis Neal Barr and Peter D. Miletta, <i>A necessary and sufficient condition for uniqueness of solutions to two point boundary value problems</i>	325
Ladislav Beran, <i>On solvability of generalized orthomodular lattices</i>	331
L. Carlitz, <i>A three-term relation for some sums related to Dedekind sums</i>	339
Arthur Herbert Copeland, Jr. and Albert Oscar Shar, <i>Images and pre-images of localization maps</i>	349
G. G. Dandapat, John L. Hunsucker and Carl Pomerance, <i>Some new results on odd perfect numbers</i>	359
M. Edelstein and L. Keener, <i>Characterizations of infinite-dimensional and nonreflexive spaces</i>	365
Francis James Flanigan, <i>On Levi factors of derivation algebras and the radical embedding problem</i>	371
Harvey Friedman, <i>Provable equality in primitive recursive arithmetic with and without induction</i>	379
Joseph Braucher Fugate and Lee K. Mohler, <i>The fixed point property for tree-like continua with finitely many arc components</i>	393
John Norman Ginsburg and Victor Harold Saks, <i>Some applications of ultrafilters in topology</i>	403
Arjun K. Gupta, <i>Generalisation of a "square" functional equation</i>	419
Thomas Lee Hayden and Frank Jones Massey, <i>Nonlinear holomorphic semigroups</i>	423
V. Kannan and Thekkedath Thrivikraman, <i>Lattices of Hausdorff compactifications of a locally compact space</i>	441
J. E. Kerlin and Wilfred Dennis Pepe, <i>Norm decreasing homomorphisms between group algebras</i>	445
Young K. Kwon, <i>Behavior of Φ-bounded harmonic functions at the Wiener boundary</i>	453
Richard Arthur Levaro, <i>Projective quasi-coherent sheaves of modules</i>	457
Chung Lin, <i>Rearranging Fourier transforms on groups</i>	463
David Lowell Lovelady, <i>An asymptotic analysis of an odd order linear differential equation</i> ..	475
Jerry Malzan, <i>On groups with a single involution</i>	481
J. F. McClendon, <i>Metric families</i>	491
Carl Pomerance, <i>On multiply perfect numbers with a special property</i>	511
Mohan S. Putcha and Adil Mohamed Yaqub, <i>Polynomial constraints for finiteness of semisimple rings</i>	519
Calvin R. Putnam, <i>Hyponormal contractions and strong power convergence</i>	531
Douglas Conner Ravenel, <i>Multiplicative operations in BP^*BP</i>	539
Judith Roitman, <i>Attaining the spread at cardinals which are not strong limits</i>	545
Kazuyuki Saitô, <i>Groups of *-automorphisms and invariant maps of von Neumann algebras</i>	553
Brian Kirkwood Schmidt, <i>Homotopy invariance of contravariant functors acting on smooth manifolds</i>	559
Kenneth Barry Stolarsky, <i>The sum of the distances to N points on a sphere</i>	563
Mark Lawrence Teply, <i>Semiprime rings with the singular splitting property</i>	575
J. Pelham Thomas, <i>Maximal connected Hausdorff spaces</i>	581
Charles Thomas Tucker, II, <i>Concerning σ-homomorphisms of Riesz spaces</i>	585
Rangachari Venkataraman, <i>Compactness in abelian topological groups</i>	591
William Charles Waterhouse, <i>Basically bounded functors and flat sheaves</i>	597
David Westreich, <i>Bifurcation of operator equations with unbounded linearized part</i>	611
William Robin Zame, <i>Extendibility, boundedness and sequential convergence in spaces of holomorphic functions</i>	619