

COUNTING INTEGERS WITH A SMOOTH TOTIENT

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ABSTRACT. We fix a gap in our proof of an upper bound for the number of positive integers $n \leq x$ for which the Euler function $\varphi(n)$ has all prime factors at most y . While doing this we obtain a stronger, likely best-possible result.

1. INTRODUCTION

Our paper [1] considers various multiplicative problems related to Euler's function φ . One of these problems concerns the distribution of integers n for which $\varphi(n)$ is y -smooth (or y -friable), meaning that all prime factors of $\varphi(n)$ are at most y . We recall that [1, Theorem 3.1] asserts that the following bound holds on the quantity $\Phi(x, y)$ defined to be the number of $n \leq x$ such that $\varphi(n)$ is y -smooth.

For any fixed $\varepsilon > 0$, numbers x, y with $y \geq (\log \log x)^{1+\varepsilon}$, and $u = \log x / \log y \rightarrow \infty$, we have the bound $\Phi(x, y) \leq x / \exp((1 + o(1))u \log \log u)$.

Paul Kinlaw has brought to our attention a flaw in our argument. Specifically, in the two-line display near the end of the proof, our upper bound on the sum $\sum_{p \leq y} p^{-c}$ is incorrect for the larger values of y in our range.

The purpose of this note is to provide a complete proof of a somewhat stronger version of [1, Theorem 3.1]. Merging Propositions 2.3 and 3.2 below we prove the following result.

Theorem 1.1. *For any fixed $\varepsilon > 0$, numbers x, y with $y \geq (\log \log x)^{1+\varepsilon}$, and $u = \log x / \log y \rightarrow \infty$, we have*

$$\Phi(x, y) \leq x \exp(-u(\log \log u + \log \log \log u + o(1))).$$

One might wonder about a matching lower bound for $\Phi(x, y)$, but this is very difficult to achieve since it depends on the distribution of

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primes p with $p-1$ being y -smooth. Let $\psi(x, y)$ denote the number of y -smooth integers at most x , and let $\psi_\pi(x, y)$ denote the number of primes $p \leq x$ such that $p-1$ is y -smooth. It has been conjectured (see [15] and the discussion therein) that in a wide range one has $\psi_\pi(x, y)/\pi(x) \sim \psi(x, y)/x$. Assuming a weak form of this conjecture, Lamzouri [9] has shown that there is a continuous monotonic function $\sigma(u)$ such that

$$\sigma(u) = \exp(-u(\log \log u + \log \log \log u + o(1))) \quad (u \rightarrow \infty),$$

and such that $\Phi(x, x^{1/u}) \sim \sigma(u)x$ as $x \rightarrow \infty$ with u bounded. The function σ is explicitly identified as the solution to the integral equation

$$u\sigma(u) = \int_0^u \sigma(u-t)\rho(t) dt,$$

where ρ is the Dickman–de Bruijn function.

In light of Lamzouri’s theorem, it may be that we have equality in Theorem 1.1.

Our proof of Theorem 1.1 is given as two results: Proposition 2.3 for the case when $y \leq x^{1/\log \log x}$ and Proposition 3.2 for the case when $y \geq \exp(\sqrt{\log x \log \log x})$.

Note that the ranges of Propositions 2.3 and 3.2 have a significant overlap. In the first range we use a variant of Rankin’s trick. In the second range we use a variant of the Hildebrand approach [7] for estimating $\psi(x, y)$.

Our proof is adaptable to multiplicative functions similar in structure to Euler’s φ -function. For example, in [14] a version of our theorem is used for the distribution of squarefree $n \leq x$ with $\sigma(n)$ being y -smooth, where σ is the sum-of-divisors function.

In a recent paper, Pollack [10] shows (as a special case) that for any fixed number $\alpha > 1$,

$$\Phi(x, (\log x)^{1/\alpha}) \leq x^{1-(\alpha+o(1)) \log \log \log x / \log \log x}$$

as $x \rightarrow \infty$. A slightly stronger inequality follows from our Theorem 1.1, though in Pollack’s result the inequality applies to sets more general than the $(\log x)^{1/\alpha}$ -smooth integers.

Our paper [1] also considered the distribution of integers n for which $\varphi(n)$ is a square and the distribution of squares in the image of φ . These results have attracted interest and since then have been improved and extended in various ways; see [5, 6, 11, 12].

In what follows, $P(n)$ denotes the largest prime factor of an integer $n > 1$, and $P(1) = 1$. The letter p always denotes a prime number; the letter n always denotes a positive integer. As usual in the subject, we

write $\log_k x$ for the k th iterate of the natural logarithm, assuming that the argument is large enough for the expression to make sense.

We use the notations $U = O(V)$ and $U \ll V$ in their standard meaning that $|U| \leq cV$ for some constant c , which throughout this paper may depend on the real positive parameters $\varepsilon, \delta, \eta$. We also use the notations $U \sim V$ and $U = o(V)$ to indicate that $U/V \rightarrow 1$ and $U/V \rightarrow 0$, respectively, when certain (explicitly indicated) parameters tend to infinity.

2. SMALL y

2.1. Dickman–de Bruijn function. As above, we denote by ρ the Dickman–de Bruijn function; we refer the reader to [8] for an exact definition and properties. For the first range it is useful to have the following two estimates involving this function.

Lemma 2.1. *Let $\eta > 0$ be arbitrarily small but fixed. For $A \geq 2$ we have*

$$\sum_{n \geq 1} A^n \rho(n) \ll \exp\left(\frac{(1 + \eta)A}{\log A}\right).$$

Proof. It is sufficient to prove the result for large numbers A . Since $\rho(n) \leq 1$, the sum up to $A/(\log A)^2$ is $\ll \exp(A/\log A)$, hence we need only consider integers $n > A/(\log A)^2$. We have for $t > 1$,

$$(2.1) \quad \rho(t) = \exp\left(-t \left(\log t + \log_2 t - 1 + \frac{\log_2 t - 1}{\log t} + O\left(\frac{(\log_2 t)^2}{(\log t)^2}\right)\right)\right);$$

see for example de Bruijn [3, (1.5)]. Consequently, if $n > A/(\log A)^2$ and A is large enough, then

$$A^n \rho(n) < \exp(n(\log A - \log n - \log_2 n + 1)).$$

In the case $n > A$, this implies that

$$A^n \rho(n) < \exp(-n \log_2 n + n) < \exp(-n),$$

and so the contribution to the sum when $n > A$ is $O(1)$. Now assume that $A/(\log A)^2 < n \leq A$. Let $f(t) = t(\log A - \log t - \log_2 t + 1)$. For any $\theta \geq 1/\log A$ one sees that

$$\begin{aligned} f\left(\frac{\theta A}{\log A}\right) &= \frac{\theta A}{\log A} \left(-\log \theta + \log_2 A - \log_2\left(\frac{\theta A}{\log A}\right) + 1\right) \\ &= -\frac{\theta A}{\log A} (\log \theta + C_{A,\theta}), \end{aligned}$$

where

$$C_{A,\theta} = \log \left(\frac{\log A + \log \theta - \log_2 A}{\log A} \right) - 1.$$

Hence, when A is large enough depending on the choice of η , we have

$$f \left(\frac{\theta A}{\log A} \right) \leq -\frac{\theta A}{\log A} (\log \theta - (1 + \eta/2)) \quad (\theta > 1/\log A).$$

Since this last expression reaches a maximum when $\theta = e^{\eta/2}$, we have $f(t) \leq e^{\eta/2} A / \log A < (1 + 3\eta/4) A / \log A$ for all $t > A / (\log A)^2$, and so

$$\sum_{A/(\log A)^2 < n \leq A} A^n \rho(n) < A \exp \left(\frac{(1 + 3\eta/4)A}{\log A} \right) \ll \exp \left(\frac{(1 + \eta)A}{\log A} \right),$$

which completes the proof of the lemma. \square

To prove the main results of this paper, we need information about the distribution of primes p with $p - 1$ suitably smooth. The following statement, which is [15, Theorem 1] (see also [1, Equation (2.3)]), suffices for our purposes.

Lemma 2.2. *For $\exp(\sqrt{\log t \log_2 t}) \leq y \leq t$ and with $u_t = \log t / \log y$ we have*

$$\psi_\pi(t, y) = \sum_{\substack{p \leq t \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} 1 \ll u_t \rho(u_t) \frac{t}{\log t} = \rho(u_t) \frac{t}{\log y}.$$

It is useful to observe that the range in Lemma 2.2 includes the range

$$y \leq t \leq y^{\log y / 2 \log_2 y}.$$

2.2. Bound on $\Phi(x, y)$ for $(\log_2 x)^{1+\varepsilon} \leq y \leq x^{1/\log_2 x}$. We give a proof of the following result.

Proposition 2.3. *Fix $\varepsilon > 0$. For $(\log_2 x)^{1+\varepsilon} \leq y \leq x^{1/\log_2 x}$, and $u = \log x / \log y \rightarrow \infty$, we have*

$$\Phi(x, y) \leq x \exp(-u(\log_2 u + \log_3 u + o(1))).$$

Proof. We may assume that u is large and shall need to do so at various points in the proof. We may also assume that $\varepsilon < 1$. Let $\delta > 0$ be arbitrarily small but fixed. We prove that

$$\Phi(x, y) \leq x \exp(-u(\log_2 u + \log_3 u - \delta + o(1))) \quad (u \rightarrow \infty),$$

which is sufficient for the desired result.

Put

$$c = 1 - (\log_2 u + \log_3 u - \delta) / \log y,$$

so that $c < 1$ for u sufficiently large. Also, $u < \log x$ implies that

$$1 - c = \frac{\log_2 u + \log_3 u - \delta}{\log y} < \frac{\log_3 x + \log_4 x}{(1 + \varepsilon) \log_3 x} < 1 - \frac{\varepsilon}{2},$$

for u sufficiently large, so we may assume that $1 > c > \varepsilon/2$. We have

$$(2.2) \quad \Phi(x, y) \leq x^c \sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ P(\varphi(n)) \leq y}} \frac{1}{n^c} \leq x^c \prod_{\substack{p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \left(1 - \frac{1}{p^c}\right)^{-1}.$$

Note that $x^c = x \exp(-u(\log_2 u + \log_3 u - \delta))$, so via (2.2) it suffices to prove that

$$(2.3) \quad - \sum_{\substack{p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \log \left(1 - \frac{1}{p^c}\right) = o(u),$$

as $u \rightarrow \infty$. This implies that, using $c > \varepsilon/2$,

$$- \sum_{\substack{p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \log \left(1 - \frac{1}{p^c}\right) = \sum_{\substack{p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \sum_{k \geq 1} \frac{1}{k p^{ck}} \ll \sum_{\substack{p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{1}{p^c}.$$

Hence, to establish (2.3) and hence the desired result, it is sufficient to show that, as $u \rightarrow \infty$,

$$(2.4) \quad \sum_{\substack{p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{1}{p^c} = o(u).$$

Put

$$(2.5) \quad z = \frac{\log y}{2 \log_2 y},$$

and consider primes $p \leq x$ with $P(p-1) \leq y$ in two ranges:

- (1) $p \leq y^z$,
- (2) $p > y^z$.

Note that the second range contains primes only in the case that $y^z \leq x$.

To estimate the first range for p , we have

$$\sum_{\substack{p \leq y^z \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{1}{p^c} \leq \sum_{1 \leq k < z+1} \sum_{\substack{y^{k-1} < p \leq y^k \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{1}{p^c}.$$

For the inner sum we use Lemma 2.2 together with partial summation and the fact that $y^{1-c} = e^{-\delta} \log u \log_2 u$ getting that

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{\substack{y^{k-1} < p \leq y^k \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{1}{p^c} &\ll \rho(k) \frac{y^{k(1-c)}}{\log y} + \int_{y^{k-1}}^{y^k} \rho(k-1) \frac{1}{t^c \log y} dt \\ &\ll \rho(k-1) \frac{y^{k(1-c)}}{(1-c) \log y} \ll \rho(k-1) (e^{-\delta} \log u \log_2 u)^k. \end{aligned}$$

We use Lemma 2.1 with $A = e^{-\delta} \log u \log_2 u$ and $\eta = \delta$, finding that

$$\sum_{\substack{p \leq y^z \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{1}{p^c} \ll A \exp\left(\frac{(1+\delta)A}{\log A}\right).$$

Since $(1+\delta)A/\log A \sim (1+\delta)e^{-\delta} \log u$ as $u \rightarrow \infty$, and $(1+\delta)e^{-\delta} < 1$, this shows that the sum in (2.4) is $O(u^{1-\delta'})$ for some $\delta' > 0$ depending on the choice of δ . Thus we have (2.4) for primes in the first range.

Now we turn to the second range. As mentioned earlier, we may assume that $y^z \leq x$. By de Bruijn [2, (1.6)] we have

$$(2.6) \quad \psi(t, y) \leq t/e^{u_t \log u_t} \quad (y^z < t \leq x),$$

where u_t is as in Lemma 2.2, for u sufficiently large. Ignoring that p is prime we have the bound

$$(2.7) \quad \sum_{\substack{y^z < p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{1}{p^c} \leq \sum_{\substack{y^z-1 < n \leq x \\ P(n) \leq y}} \frac{1}{n^c} \leq 1 + \sum_{z+1 \leq k \leq u} \sum_{\substack{y^{k-1} < n \leq y^k \\ P(n) \leq y}} \frac{1}{n^c}.$$

Next, we put

$$y_0 = \exp((\log_2 x)^2)$$

and consider separately the cases $y \geq y_0$ and $y < y_0$. In the case that $y \geq y_0$, using (2.6) the inner sum on the right side of (2.7) satisfies

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{\substack{y^{k-1} < n \leq y^k \\ P(n) \leq y}} \frac{1}{n^c} &\leq \frac{\psi(y^k, y)}{y^{kc}} + \int_{y^{k-1}}^{y^k} \frac{c \psi(t, y)}{t^{c+1}} dt \\ &\leq k^{-k} y^{k(1-c)} + (k-1)^{-(k-1)} \int_{y^{k-1}}^{y^k} t^{-c} dt \\ &\ll k^{-(k-1)} \frac{y^{k(1-c)}}{1-c} \\ &\leq k \log y \cdot \exp(-k(\log k - \log_2 u - \log_3 u + \delta)). \end{aligned}$$

Since $y \geq y_0$, $k \geq z$, with z given by (2.5), and $u < \log x$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \log k - \log_2 u - \log_3 u &\geq \log z - \log_2 u - \log_3 u \\ &\geq \log_2 y - \log_3 y - \log 2 - \log_2 u - \log_3 u \\ &\geq \frac{7}{8} \log_2 y - \log_2 u - \log_3 u \\ &\geq \frac{7}{4} \log_3 x - \log_2 u - \log_3 u > \frac{1}{2} \log_3 x \end{aligned}$$

provided that u is large. Hence,

$$\sum_{\substack{y^{k-1} < n \leq y^k \\ P(n) \leq y}} \frac{1}{n^c} \ll \exp(-k) \log y$$

and so the sum in (2.7) is $O(\exp(-z) \log y) = O(1)$.

It remains to handle the second range when $y < y_0$. In this case, we use an Euler product for a second time, getting that

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ P(n) \leq y}} n^{-c} &< \prod_{p \leq y} (1 - p^{-c})^{-1} \ll \exp\left(\sum_{p \leq y} p^{-c}\right) \\ &= \exp\left(\text{li}(y^{1-c})(1 + O(1/\log y)) + O(|\log(1-c)|)\right), \end{aligned}$$

where we have used [13, Equation (2.4)] in the last step. Now

$$\text{li}(y^{1-c}) = (1 + o(1)) \frac{y^{1-c}}{(1-c) \log y} = \frac{1 + o(1)}{e^\delta} \log u,$$

as $u \rightarrow \infty$, and

$$|\log(1-c)| < \log_2 y < 2 \log_3 x \ll \log_2 u.$$

Therefore

$$\sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ P(n) \leq y}} n^{-c} \leq u^{e^{-\delta/2}}$$

for u sufficiently large. This completes the proof. \square

3. LARGE y

3.1. A version of the Hildebrand identity. We begin this section by proving an analog of the Hildebrand identity which is adapted to our function $\Phi(x, y)$. Note that it is given as an inequality, but it would not be hard to account for the excess on the higher side.

Lemma 3.1. *For $x \geq y \geq 2$ we have*

$$\Phi(x, y) \leq \frac{1}{\log x} \int_1^x \frac{\Phi(t, y)}{t} dt + \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{d \leq x \\ P(\varphi(d)) \leq y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{d}, y\right) \Lambda(d).$$

Proof. By partial summation, we have

$$(3.1) \quad \sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ P(\varphi(n)) \leq y}} \log n = \Phi(x, y) \log x - \int_1^x \frac{\Phi(t, y)}{t} dt.$$

On the other hand, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ P(\varphi(n)) \leq y}} \log n &= \sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ P(\varphi(n)) \leq y}} \sum_{d|n} \Lambda(d) = \sum_{\substack{d \leq x \\ P(\varphi(d)) \leq y}} \sum_{\substack{m \leq x/d \\ P(\varphi(md)) \leq y}} \Lambda(d) \\ &\leq \sum_{\substack{d \leq x \\ P(\varphi(d)) \leq y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{d}, y\right) \Lambda(d). \end{aligned}$$

Substituting (3.1) on the left side and solving the resulting inequality for $\Phi(x, y)$ gives the result. \square

3.2. Bound on $\Phi(x, y)$ for $y \geq \exp(\sqrt{\log x \log_2 x})$.

Proposition 3.2. *For $y \geq \exp(\sqrt{\log x \log_2 x})$, and $u = \log x / \log y \rightarrow \infty$, we have*

$$\Phi(x, y) \leq x \exp(-u(\log_2 u + \log_3 u + o(1))).$$

Proof. Let $\delta > 0$ be arbitrarily small but fixed, and put

$$g(u) = \exp(-u(\log_2 u + \log_3 u - \delta)).$$

It suffices to show that $\Phi(x, y) \ll xg(u)$ for x, y in the given range.

For any given $u \geq 3$, which without loss of generality we may assume, let Γ_u be the supremum of $\Phi(x, y)/(xg(u))$ for all x, y with $y = x^{1/u}$, so that trivially $\Gamma_u \leq 1/g(u)$. Further, let

$$\gamma_u = \sup\{\Gamma_v : 3 \leq v \leq u\}.$$

Our goal is to show that γ_u is bounded. Towards this end, we may assume that $u \geq u_0 \geq 3$, where u_0 is a suitably large constant, depending on the choice of δ . Since γ_u is nondecreasing as a function of u , we may assume that

$$(3.2) \quad \gamma_u \geq 1 \quad (u \geq u_0),$$

for otherwise γ_u is clearly bounded. We further assume that u_0 is large enough so that

$$(3.3) \quad \frac{1}{\log v} + \frac{1}{\log v \log_2 v} \leq \delta \quad (v \geq u_0).$$

Let N be such that

$$u_0 \leq N \leq \exp(\sqrt{\log x / \log_2 x}) - 1.$$

We claim that for u_0 large enough

$$(3.4) \quad \sup_{N < u \leq N+1} \Gamma_u \leq \gamma_N.$$

By induction, this implies that $\gamma_u \leq \gamma_{u_0}$ for all $u \geq u_0$, and therefore

$$\Phi(x, y) \leq \gamma_{u_0} x g(u)$$

for all $u \geq u_0$, and the result would follow.

One other observation is that $g(u) \sim e^{-\delta} g(u+1) \log u \log_2 u$ as $u \rightarrow \infty$, so that with u_0 large and $u_0 \leq N < u \leq N+1$, we have

$$(3.5) \quad g(N) \leq g(u) \log u \log_2 u \quad \text{and} \quad g(N-1) \leq g(u) (\log u \log_2 u)^2.$$

To establish (3.4) we first consider the term

$$\mathfrak{T}_1 = \frac{1}{\log x} \int_1^x \frac{\Phi(t, y)}{t} dt$$

in Lemma 3.1. We split the range of integration as follows:

$$\int_1^x = \int_1^{y^{u_0}} + \int_{y^{u_0}}^{y^N} + \int_{y^N}^x.$$

We have trivially that

$$(3.6) \quad \int_1^{y^{u_0}} \frac{\Phi(t, y)}{t} dt < y^{u_0}.$$

We show that for u_0 sufficiently large, we have

$$(3.7) \quad y^{u_0} \leq x g(u) / g(u_0).$$

Since $y^{u_0} = x^{u_0/u}$, (3.7) is equivalent to showing that for

$$D(u) = \left(1 - \frac{u_0}{u}\right) \log x - \log g(u_0) - u(\log_2 u + \log_3 u - \delta) \geq 0,$$

we have

$$(3.8) \quad D(u) \geq 0.$$

Note that the hypothesis $y \geq \exp(\sqrt{\log x \log_2 x})$ implies that $\log x > u^2(\log_2 u + \log_3 u)$. By considering $D'(u)$ and using (3.3), we see that

$D(u)$ is increasing for $u \geq u_0$ and u_0 sufficiently large. Since $D(u_0) = 0$, this proves (3.8), which establishes (3.7), and so via (3.6) we have

$$(3.9) \quad \int_1^{y^{u_0}} \frac{\Phi(t, y)}{t} dt \leq xg(u)/g(u_0).$$

Also,

$$\int_{y^{u_0}}^{y^N} \frac{\Phi(t, y)}{t} dt \leq \gamma_N I,$$

where

$$I = \int_{y^{u_0}}^{y^N} g(\log t / \log y) dt = \int_{u_0}^N g(v) y^v \log y dv = \int_{u_0}^N g(v) d(y^v).$$

Thus, I is equal to

$$\begin{aligned} y^v g(v) \Big|_{u_0}^N + \int_{u_0}^N \left(\log_2 v + \log_3 v - \delta + \frac{1}{\log v} + \frac{1}{\log v \log_2 v} \right) g(v) y^v dv \\ < y^N g(N) + \frac{\log_2 N + \log_3 N}{\log y} I, \end{aligned}$$

where we have used (3.3) in the last step. Assuming u_0 is sufficiently large (and thus so are x and y), we see that

$$(3.10) \quad \int_{y^{u_0}}^{y^N} \frac{\Phi(t, y)}{t} dt < 2\gamma_N y^N g(N).$$

Finally,

$$(3.11) \quad \int_{y^N}^x \frac{\Phi(t, y)}{t} dt \leq \int_{y^N}^x \frac{\Phi(t, t^{1/N})}{t} dt \leq \gamma_N g(N)(x - y^N).$$

Thus, using (3.9), (3.10), and (3.11), we have

$$(3.12) \quad \begin{aligned} \mathfrak{I}_1 &\leq \frac{xg(u)}{g(u_0) \log x} + \frac{2\gamma_N x}{\log x} g(N) \\ &\leq \frac{2\gamma_N \log u \log_2 u + 1/g(u_0)}{\log x} xg(u), \end{aligned}$$

assuming that u_0 is sufficiently large, where we used (3.5) for the last step.

Next, we consider the second term

$$\mathfrak{I}_2 = \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{d \leq x \\ P(\varphi(d)) \leq y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{d}, y\right) \Lambda(d)$$

in Lemma 3.1, and begin by estimating the contribution from terms $d \leq y$. For such d we have $y^{N-1} \leq x/d$ (since $y^N \leq x$), which implies that $y \leq (x/d)^{1/(N-1)}$. Hence, this part of \mathfrak{F}_2 is at most

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{d \leq y} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{d}, y\right) \Lambda(d) &\leq \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{d \leq y} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{d}, \left(\frac{x}{d}\right)^{1/(N-1)}\right) \Lambda(d) \\ &\leq \frac{\gamma_N x}{\log x} g(N-1) \sum_{d \leq y} \frac{\Lambda(d)}{d}. \end{aligned}$$

Hence, by the Mertens formula

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{d \leq y} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{d}, y\right) \Lambda(d) &\leq \frac{2\gamma_N x \log y}{\log x} g(N-1) \\ (3.13) \qquad \qquad \qquad &\leq \frac{2\gamma_N x (\log u \log_2 u)^2}{u} g(u), \end{aligned}$$

assuming that u_0 is sufficiently large and using (3.5).

Next, we consider the contribution from terms $d = p^a > y$ for which $p \leq y$ (and thus the positive integer a is at least two), finding from the trivial bound $\Phi(x/p^a, y) \leq x/p^a$ that

$$(3.14) \quad \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{p \leq y \\ p^a > y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{p^a}, y\right) \log p \leq \frac{x}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{p \leq y \\ p^a > y}} \frac{\log p}{p^a} \ll \frac{x}{\sqrt{y} \log x}.$$

The remaining terms are of the form $d = p^a$ with $p > y$, and since $P(\varphi(d)) \leq y$ we conclude that $a = 1$, i.e., $d = p$. Therefore, we need to estimate

$$(3.15) \quad \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{y < p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{p}, y\right) \log p = \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{1 \leq k < u} S_k,$$

where

$$S_k = \sum_{\substack{y^k < p \leq \min\{x, y^{k+1}\} \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{p}, y\right) \log p.$$

We also denote

$$T_k = \sum_{\substack{y^k < p \leq \min\{x, y^{k+1}\} \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{\log p}{p}.$$

For integers $k \leq u/2$ we use the bound

$$S_k \leq \gamma_N x g(u-k-1) T_k \leq \gamma_N x \log u \log_2 u \cdot g(u-k) T_k,$$

whereas for larger integers $k > u/2$, the trivial bound $\Phi(x/p, y) \leq x/p$ and (3.2) together imply that

$$S_k \leq \gamma_N x T_k;$$

consequently, using (3.15),

$$(3.16) \quad \begin{aligned} & \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{y < p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{p}, y\right) \log p \\ & \leq \frac{\gamma_N x \log u \log_2 u}{\log x} \sum_{1 \leq k \leq u/2} g(u-k) T_k + \frac{\gamma_N x}{\log x} \sum_{u/2 < k < u} T_k. \end{aligned}$$

Next, define

$$h(k) = \exp(-k(\log k + \log_2(k+1) - 1))$$

and note that from (2.1) we have

$$(3.17) \quad k\rho(k) \ll h(k).$$

By partial summation, using Lemma 2.2 together with (3.17), we see that there is an absolute constant c_0 such that for $1 \leq k < u$ we have

$$T_k = \sum_{\substack{y^k < p \leq \min\{x, y^{k+1}\} \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \frac{\log p}{p} \leq c_0 h(k) \log y.$$

Using this bound in (3.16) along with the simple bound

$$h(k) \leq \frac{g(u)}{u} \quad (k > u/2)$$

leads to

$$(3.18) \quad \begin{aligned} & \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{y < p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{p}, y\right) \log p \\ & \leq \frac{c_0 \gamma_N x \log u \log_2 u}{u} \sum_{1 \leq k \leq u/2} g(u-k) h(k) + \frac{c_0 \gamma_N x}{u} g(u). \end{aligned}$$

To bound the sum in (3.18), we start with the estimate

$$(3.19) \quad \log g(u-k) = -(u-k)(\log_2 u + \log_3 u - \delta) + O\left(\frac{k}{\log u}\right),$$

which holds uniformly for $1 \leq k \leq u/2$. Using (3.19) and assuming that u_0 is sufficiently large depending on δ , we derive that

$$(3.20) \quad g(u-k)h(k) \leq g(u)e^{B_u(k)} \quad (1 \leq k \leq u/2),$$

where

$$B_u(k) = k(\log_2 u + \log_3 u - \log k - \log_2(k+1) + 1 - \delta/2).$$

Note that

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dB_u(k)}{dk} &= \log_2 u + \log_3 u - \delta/2 \\ &\quad - \log k - \log_2(k+1) - \frac{k}{(k+1)\log(k+1)} \\ &= \log\left(e^{-\delta/2}\frac{\log u}{k}\right) + \log\frac{\log_2 u}{\log(k+1)} - \frac{k}{(k+1)\log(k+1)}. \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the function B_u reaches its maximum for some $k = k_0$ with

$$k_0 = e^{-\delta/2} \log u + O\left(\frac{\log u}{\log_2 u}\right)$$

and, since for a constant $C > 0$ the derivative is bounded independently of u for any k in the interval

$$k \in \left[e^{-\delta/2} \log u - C \frac{\log u}{\log_2 u}, e^{-\delta/2} \log u + C \frac{\log u}{\log_2 u} \right],$$

we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{1 \leq k \leq u/2} B_u(k) &= B_u(e^{-\delta/2} \log u) + O\left(\frac{\log u}{\log_2 u}\right) \\ &= e^{-\delta/2} \log u + O\left(\frac{\log u}{\log_2 u}\right). \end{aligned}$$

This implies via (3.20) that

$$(3.21) \quad \max_{1 \leq k \leq u/2} g(u-k)h(k) \leq g(u)u^{1-\delta/3} \quad (1 \leq k \leq u/2),$$

if u_0 is sufficiently large. Moreover, for any fixed constant $c > 1$, it is easy to see that B_u is decreasing for $k \geq c \log u$ if u_0 is sufficiently large depending on δ and c , and after a simple estimate we have

$$\max_{c \log u \leq k \leq u/2} B_u(k) \leq (c - c \log c) \log u.$$

In particular, with $c = 3$ (and noting that $3 - 3 \log 3 = -0.295 \dots$), this implies via (3.20) that

$$(3.22) \quad \max_{3 \log u \leq k \leq u/2} g(u-k)h(k) \leq g(u)u^{-1/4}.$$

Splitting the range of the summation in (3.18) according to whether $k \leq 3 \log u$ or $k > 3 \log u$, and using (3.21) and (3.22), respectively, we

have

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{1 \leq k \leq u/2} g(u-k)h(k) &\leq \sum_{1 \leq k \leq 3 \log u} g(u)u^{1-\delta/3} + \sum_{3 \log u < k \leq u/2} g(u)u^{-1/4} \\ &\leq 3g(u)u^{1-\delta/3} \log u + g(u)u^{3/4} \\ &\leq g(u)u^{1-\delta/4} \end{aligned}$$

if δ is small enough and u_0 sufficiently large. Inserting this bound into (3.18), it follows that

$$\begin{aligned} (3.23) \quad \frac{1}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{y < p \leq x \\ P(p-1) \leq y}} \Phi\left(\frac{x}{p}, y\right) \log p \\ &\leq \frac{c_0 \gamma_N x \log u \log_2 u}{u} g(u)u^{1-\delta/4} + \frac{c_0 \gamma_N x}{u} g(u) \\ &\leq c_0 \gamma_N u^{-\delta/5} g(u)x, \end{aligned}$$

again assuming that u_0 is large.

Combining the bounds (3.13), (3.14) and (3.23) we obtain

$$(3.24) \quad \mathfrak{T}_2 \leq \frac{2\gamma_N x (\log u \log_2 u)^2}{u} g(u) + c_0 \gamma_N u^{-\delta/5} g(u)x + O\left(\frac{x}{\sqrt{y} \log x}\right).$$

We deduce from Lemma 3.1 and the bounds (3.12) and (3.24), that for u_0 large,

$$\Phi(x, y) \leq \gamma_N g(u)x.$$

This establishes our claim (3.4), and the proposition is proved. \square

4. COMMENTS

The bound of Proposition 2.3, taken at the lower range with $y = (\log_2 x)^{1+\varepsilon}$, and thus with

$$u = \frac{\log x}{(1+\varepsilon) \log_3 x},$$

implies that

$$\begin{aligned} \Phi(x, (\log_2 x)^{1+\varepsilon}) &\leq x \exp\left(-\frac{\log x}{1+\varepsilon} + O\left(\frac{\log x \log_4 x}{\log_3 x}\right)\right) \\ &= x^{\varepsilon/(1+\varepsilon)+o(1)}, \end{aligned}$$

Hence $\Phi(x, \log_2 x) = x^{o(1)}$. Although we do not have any lower bounds for this range that are much better than the trivial bound $\Phi(x, y) \geq$

$\psi(x, y)$, this does suggest the existence of a phase transition near the point $y = \log_2 x$. Using the same heuristic as in Erdős [4], one should have quite small values of y with $\Phi(x, y) = x^{1-o(1)}$. In particular this should hold for any y of the shape $(\log x)^\varepsilon$, with $\varepsilon > 0$ fixed. It is interesting to recall that for the classical function $\psi(x, y)$ there is a well-known phase transition near the point $y = \log x$; see [3].

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