

Triple Product Identities

There are many ways to express triple products, and I explain three of them: two by Jacobi and one by Ramanujan. Ramanujan developed an elegant version of the triple product from which we can derive a version of the pentagonal number theorem—truly amazing.

The concepts are illustrated using examples from Python programs that use the symbolic programming features of Sympy. For detailed explanations, derivations, and proofs, see Chapter 5 of *An Introduction to q-analysis* by Warren P. Johnson.

1 Jacobi Triple Product Identity

For $|q| < 1$ and $z \neq 0$, Gauss and Jacobi proved that $(-zq; q^2)_\infty \left(-\frac{q}{z}; q^2\right)_\infty (q^2; q^2)_\infty = \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} q^{n^2} z^n$.

For example, the results from setting $q = 0.5$ and $z = 1$ are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Jacobi Triple Product Identity Convergence			
inf	$(-zq; q^2)_\infty \left(-\frac{q}{z}; q^2\right)_\infty (q^2; q^2)_\infty$	$\sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} q^{n^2} z^n$	Difference
5	2.126859411	2.128936797	0.208%
7	2.12880689	2.12893683	0.013%
10	2.12893480	2.12893480	0.000%

2 Jacobi Triple Product Alternative

Replacing q^2 with q or q with \sqrt{q} gives $(-z\sqrt{q}; q)_\infty \left(-\frac{\sqrt{q}}{z}; q\right)_\infty (q; q)_\infty = \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} q^{\frac{n^2}{2}} z^n$ and then z

with $\frac{-x}{\sqrt{q}}$ gives an alternative form of Jacobi's triple product identity $(x; q)_\infty \left(\frac{q}{x}; q\right)_\infty (q; q)_\infty =$

$\sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} (-1)^n q^{\frac{n(n-1)}{2}} x^n$ that is much simpler on the product side at the expense of a minor reduction

in simplicity on the summation side. For example, the results from setting $q = 0.8$ and $x = 2$ are shown in Table 2.

3 Ramanujan Triple Product Identity

Ramanujan independently developed a very elegant version of Jacobi's triple product identity in the form $(-a; ab)_\infty (-b; ab)_\infty (ab; ab)_\infty = \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} a^{\frac{n(n+1)}{2}} b^{\frac{n(n-1)}{2}}$ with $|ab| < 1$. Since ab plays a similar role as q , it is interesting to see what happens if we substitute q for ab , q/a for b , and q/b for a .

This results in $(-\frac{q}{b}; q)_\infty (-\frac{q}{a}; q)_\infty (q; q)_\infty = \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} \left(\frac{q}{b}\right)^{\frac{n(n+1)}{2}} \left(\frac{q}{a}\right)^{\frac{n(n-1)}{2}}$. Then, substituting $-x$ for a

and for q/b , results in $(x; q)_\infty \left(\frac{q}{x}; q\right)_\infty (q; q)_\infty = \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} (-1)^n q^{\frac{n(n-1)}{2}} x^n$, which is Jacobi's triple product identity.

For example, the results from setting $a = 0.5$ and $b = 1$ are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Ramanujan Triple Product Identity Convergence				
<i>inf</i>	$(-a; ab)_\infty (-b; ab)_\infty (ab; ab)_\infty$	$\sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} a^{\frac{n(n+1)}{2}} b^{\frac{n(n-1)}{2}}$	Difference	
7	3.2326E+00	3.2833E+00	-5.1%	
10	3.2769E+00	3.2833E+00	-0.640%	
15	3.2831E+00	3.2833E+00	-0.02004%	

4 Gauss Pentagonal Number Theorem

Starting with the Ramanujan triple product identity, we can derive $(-q; q^3)_\infty (-q^2; q^3)_\infty (q^3; q^3)_\infty$
 $= \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} q^{\frac{n(3n+1)}{2}}$, which Johnson refers to as Gauss's pentagonal number theorem because the summation side is equivalent to (but not exactly the same as) the summation side of Euler's pentagonal number theorem (see my article Pentagonal Numbers).

As is the case for Euler's theorem, the summation side of Gauss's theorem yields a polynomial for which the pentagonal numbers are represented by every second exponent. For example, the low-order terms are $q^{117} + q^{100} + q^{92} + q^{77} + q^{70} + q^{57} + q^{51} + q^{40} + q^{35} + q^{26} + q^{22} + q^{15} + q^{12} + q^7 + q^5 + q^2 + q + 2$. This differs from Euler's summation only in the sign of some of the terms.

The summation side provides perfect results for any value used to approximate infinity, but the product side uncovers results slowly as infinity increases. For example, for $\text{inf} = 20$ every second exponent is a pentagonal number up to 35, but for $\text{inf} = 25$ every second exponent is a pentagonal number up to 70.