

The general solution of free space real vector potential  $\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}, t)$  is a superposition of plane waves:

$$\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}, t) = \int \frac{d^3k}{(2\pi)^3} [\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k}) e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}-ickt} + \mathbf{A}^*(\mathbf{k}) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt}] \quad (1)$$

where the amplitude  $\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k})$  can be obtained by

$$\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k}) = \frac{1}{2} \int d^3x \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}, t) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt} \quad (2)$$

This is justified since plugging (2) into the RHS of (1) gives

$$\int \frac{d^3k}{(2\pi)^3} \frac{1}{2} \left[ \int d^3x' \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}', t) e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot(\mathbf{x}-\mathbf{x}')} + \int d^3x' \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}', t) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot(\mathbf{x}-\mathbf{x}')} \right] = \int d^3x' \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}', t) \delta(\mathbf{x}-\mathbf{x}') = \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}, t) \quad (3)$$

Similarly for the  $\mathbf{E}, \mathbf{B}$  fields,

$$\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}, t) = \int \frac{d^3k}{(2\pi)^3} [\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{k}) e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}-ickt} + \mathbf{E}^*(\mathbf{k}) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt}] \quad \mathbf{E}(\mathbf{k}) = \frac{1}{2} \int d^3x \mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}, t) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt} \quad (4)$$

$$\mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}, t) = \int \frac{d^3k}{(2\pi)^3} [\mathbf{B}(\mathbf{k}) e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}-ickt} + \mathbf{B}^*(\mathbf{k}) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt}] \quad \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{k}) = \frac{1}{2} \int d^3x \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}, t) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt} \quad (5)$$

For each plane wave  $\mathbf{k}$ , by  $\mathbf{E} = -\partial\mathbf{A}/\partial t$  and  $\mathbf{B} = \nabla \times \mathbf{A}$ , we can write

$$\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{k}) = ick\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k}) \quad \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{k}) = i\mathbf{k} \times \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k}) \quad (6)$$

We can further decompose  $\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k})$  into the circular polarization basis  $\epsilon_{\pm}(\mathbf{k})$ ,

$$\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k}) = \sum_{\lambda} \epsilon_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) A_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) \quad (7)$$

which gives

$$\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}, t) = \sum_{\lambda} \int \frac{d^3k}{(2\pi)^3} [\mathbf{E}_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}-ickt} + \mathbf{E}_{\lambda}^*(\mathbf{k}) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt}] \quad \text{where } \mathbf{E}_{\lambda}(k) = ickA_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) \epsilon_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) \quad (8)$$

$$\mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}, t) = \sum_{\lambda} \int \frac{d^3k}{(2\pi)^3} [\mathbf{B}_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}-ickt} + \mathbf{B}_{\lambda}^*(\mathbf{k}) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt}] \quad \text{where } \mathbf{B}_{\lambda}(k) = iA_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) [\mathbf{k} \times \epsilon_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k})] \quad (9)$$

For the plane wave in the  $(\mathbf{k}, \lambda)$  mode, its energy density is

$$u_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) = \frac{\epsilon_0}{2} \left[ \frac{\mathbf{E}_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}-ickt} + \mathbf{E}_{\lambda}^*(\mathbf{k}) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt}}{(2\pi)^3} \right]^2 + \frac{1}{2\mu_0} \left[ \frac{\mathbf{B}_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) e^{i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}-ickt} + \mathbf{B}_{\lambda}^*(\mathbf{k}) e^{-i\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{x}+ickt}}{(2\pi)^3} \right]^2 \quad (10)$$

Using  $\epsilon_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \epsilon_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) = 0$  and  $\epsilon_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \epsilon_{\lambda}^*(\mathbf{k}) = 1$ , this turns into

$$u_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^6} \left[ \epsilon_0 \mathbf{E}_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{E}_{\lambda}^*(\mathbf{k}) + \frac{1}{\mu_0} \mathbf{B}_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{B}_{\lambda}^*(\mathbf{k}) \right] = \frac{2\epsilon_0 c^2 k^2}{(2\pi)^6} |A_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k})|^2 \quad (11)$$

According to the problem statement, the number of photons for each mode  $(\mathbf{k}, \lambda)$  is to be defined as this plane wave's energy divided by  $\hbar ck$ . But clearly the energy of the whole plane wave is infinity. Let's use the "Big Box" trick. Consider a big box  $L^3$  where the waves have cyclic boundary conditions, i.e.,

$$k_i L = 2n_i \pi \quad \text{for some integer } n_i \quad (12)$$

Knowing we will eventually take the  $L \rightarrow \infty$  limit, we can write the number of photons of mode  $(\mathbf{k}, \lambda)$  as

$$N_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k}) = \frac{L^3 u_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k})}{\hbar ck} = \frac{L^3}{(2\pi)^6} \frac{2\epsilon_0 ck}{\hbar} |A_{\lambda}(\mathbf{k})|^2 \quad (13)$$

Also note by (7)

$$\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{A}^*(\mathbf{k}) = |A_+(\mathbf{k})|^2 + |A_-(\mathbf{k})|^2 \quad (14)$$

hence

$$\begin{aligned} N(\mathbf{k}) = N_+(\mathbf{k}) + N_-(\mathbf{k}) &= \frac{L^3}{(2\pi)^6} \frac{2\epsilon_0 c k}{\hbar} \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{A}^*(\mathbf{k}) && \text{by (6)} \implies \\ &= \frac{L^3}{(2\pi)^6} \frac{2\epsilon_0 c k}{\hbar} \cdot \frac{1}{2c^2 k^2} [\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{E}^*(\mathbf{k}) + c^2 \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{B}^*(\mathbf{k})] \\ &= \frac{L^3}{(2\pi)^6} \frac{\epsilon_0}{\hbar c k} [\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{E}^*(\mathbf{k}) + c^2 \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{B}^*(\mathbf{k})] \end{aligned} \quad (15)$$

For this big box, the total number of photons for all wave vectors will be  $\sum_i N(\mathbf{k}_i)$ , where the sum goes over all the integer grid points defined in (12).

When  $L \rightarrow \infty$ , the sum becomes integral, but due to (12), the integral measure will be  $d^3k \cdot (2\pi/L)^3$  (which is necessary to fix the dimensions), i.e.,

$$\begin{aligned} N &= \lim_{L \rightarrow \infty} \int d^3k \left( \frac{2\pi}{L} \right)^3 N(\mathbf{k}) = \lim_{L \rightarrow \infty} \int d^3k \left( \frac{2\pi}{L} \right)^3 \cdot \frac{L^3}{(2\pi)^6} \frac{\epsilon_0}{\hbar c k} [\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{E}^*(\mathbf{k}) + c^2 \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{B}^*(\mathbf{k})] \\ &= \frac{1}{(2\pi)^3} \frac{\epsilon_0}{\hbar c} \underbrace{\int \frac{d^3k}{k} [\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{E}^*(\mathbf{k}) + c^2 \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{k}) \cdot \mathbf{B}^*(\mathbf{k})]}_I \end{aligned} \quad (16)$$

where we see the parameter  $L$  has dropped out.

Using the integral representation of  $\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{k})$  and  $\mathbf{B}(\mathbf{k})$  in (4) and (5), we have

$$\begin{aligned} I &= \frac{1}{4} \int \frac{d^3k}{k} \int d^3x \int d^3x' [\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}, t) \cdot \mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}', t) + c^2 \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}, t) \cdot \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}', t)] e^{-ik \cdot (\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}')} \\ &= \frac{1}{4} \int d^3x \int d^3x' [\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}, t) \cdot \mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}', t) + c^2 \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}, t) \cdot \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}', t)] \underbrace{\int d^3k \left[ \frac{e^{-ik \cdot (\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}')}}{k} \right]}_J \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

where  $J$  is the famous Fourier transform of the Coulomb potential, evaluated below

$$\begin{aligned} \int d^3k \left[ \frac{e^{-ik \cdot (\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}')}}{k} \right] &= \int_0^\infty k dk \int_0^\pi \sin \theta d\theta \int_0^{2\pi} d\phi e^{-ik |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'| \cos \theta} \\ &= 2\pi \int_0^\infty k dk \left( \frac{e^{ik |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} - e^{-ik |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|}}{ik |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} \right) \\ &= \frac{4\pi}{|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} \text{Im} \int_0^\infty e^{ik |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} dk \\ &= \frac{4\pi}{|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} \lim_{\mu \rightarrow 0} \left( \text{Im} \int_0^\infty e^{ik |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} e^{-\mu k} dk \right) \\ &= \frac{4\pi}{|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} \lim_{\mu \rightarrow 0} \left[ \text{Im} \left( \frac{1}{\mu - i |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} \right) \right] \\ &= \frac{4\pi}{|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|} \lim_{\mu \rightarrow 0} \left( \frac{|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|}{\mu^2 + |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|^2} \right) \\ &= \frac{4\pi}{|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|^2} \end{aligned} \quad (18)$$

Putting everything back together in (16), we finally get

$$N = \frac{\epsilon_0}{8\pi^2 \hbar c} \int d^3x \int d^3x' \left[ \frac{\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}, t) \cdot \mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}', t) + c^2 \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}, t) \cdot \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{x}', t)}{|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'|^2} \right] \quad (19)$$

This is 1/2 of the desired result, I cannot find where in my derivation I have mistakenly generated this factor.