



Derivation of Planck's Radiation law

Planck considered the black body radiations (in the hohlraum) to consist of linear oscillators of molecular dimensions and that the energy of a linear oscillator can assume only the discrete values

$$0, hv, 2hv, 3hv, \dots, nhv$$

If N_0, N_1, N_2, \dots are the number of oscillators per unit volume of the hohlraum possessing energies $0, hv, 2hv, \dots$ respectively, then the total number of oscillators N per unit volume will be

$$N = N_0 + N_1 + N_2 + \dots$$

But the number of oscillators, N_r having energy E_r is given by (Maxwell's formula)

$$N_r = N_0 e^{-E_r/kT}$$

Putting these values in eqn., we get

$$\begin{aligned} N &= N_0 + N_0 e^{-hv/kT} + N_0 e^{-2hv/kT} + \dots + N_0 e^{-nhv/kT} \\ &= N_0(1 + e^{-hv/kT} + e^{-2hv/kT} + \dots) \\ &= \frac{N_0}{1 - e^{-hv/kT}} \quad [\because (1 - e^{-x})^{-1} = 1 + e^{-x} + e^{-2x} + \dots] \end{aligned}$$

The total energy of N oscillators will be

$$\begin{aligned} E &= N_1 \cdot hv + N_2 \cdot 2hv + N_3 \cdot 3hv + \dots \\ &= hv(N_1 + 2N_2 + 3N_3 + \dots) \\ &= hv(N_0 e^{hv/kT} + 2N_0 e^{2hv/kT} + 3N_0 e^{3hv/kT} + \dots) \\ &= N_0 hv(e^{-hv/kT} + 2e^{-2hv/kT} + 3e^{-3hv/kT} + \dots) \\ &= N_0 hve^{-hv/kT}(1 + 2e^{-hv/kT} + 3e^{-2hv/kT} + \dots) \\ &= N_0 hve^{-hv/kT}(1 + 2x + 3x^2 + \dots) \quad (\text{where } x = e^{-hv/kT}) \\ &= N_0 hve^{-hv/kT}(1 - x)^{-2} \\ &= \frac{N_0 hve^{-hv/kT}}{(1 - x^2)} = N_0 hv \frac{e^{-hv/kT}}{(1 - e^{-hv/kT})^2} \end{aligned}$$

Hence the average energy per oscillator is

$$\begin{aligned} E &= \frac{E}{N} = N_0 hv \frac{e^{-hv/kT}}{(1 - e^{-hv/kT})^2} \times \frac{1 - e^{-hv/kT}}{N_0} \\ &= \frac{hve^{-hv/kT}}{1 - e^{-hv/kT}} = \frac{hv}{e^{-hv/kT} - 1} \end{aligned}$$

(on dividing numerator and denominator by $e^{-hv/kT}$)

Thus we see that the average energy of the oscillator is not Kt (as given by classical theory) but equal to $hv/(e^{hv/kT} - 1)$ according to Planck's quantum theory.



Further, it can be deduced that the number of oscillators per unit volume having frequency in the range of ν and $\nu+d\nu$ is equal to

$$\frac{8\pi\nu^2 d\nu}{c^3}$$

Hence the average energy per unit volume (i.e., energy density) inside the enclosure is obtained by multiplying with i.e. it is given by

$$E_\nu d\nu = \frac{8\pi\nu^2 d\nu}{c^3} \times \frac{h\nu}{e^{h\nu/kT} - 1}$$

Putting $\nu = \frac{c}{\lambda}$ and $d\nu = -\frac{c}{\lambda^2} d\lambda$, the average energy per unit volume in the enclosure of the wave lights between λ and $\lambda + d\lambda$ will be

$$E_\lambda d\lambda = \frac{8\pi hc}{\lambda^5} \frac{1}{e^{hc/\lambda kT} - 1} d\lambda$$

Or the energy radiated by the black body corresponding to wavelength λ is

$$E_\lambda = \frac{8\pi hc}{\lambda^5} \frac{1}{e^{hc/\lambda kT} - 1}$$

Which is Planck's radiation law or Planck's distribution law?

The above equation is also quite often written in the form

$$E_\lambda = c_1 \lambda^{-5} \frac{1}{e^{c_2/\lambda T} - 1}$$

where $c_1 = 8\pi hc$ and $c_2 = hc/k$ are universal constants.