

The Field Momentum of Two Time-Dependent Dipoles

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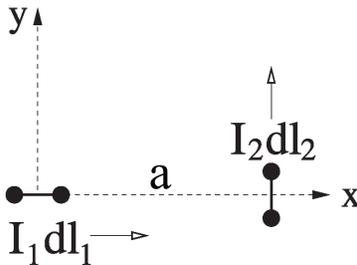
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A recent article by Narayan [1] illustrated that magnetic forces do not obey Newton’s 3rd law of action and reaction via the example of two “point” electric dipoles whose moments $\mathbf{p}_i = p_{0,i} e^{\lambda t} \hat{\mathbf{x}}_i$ grow exponentially with time. He correctly found that $\mathbf{F}_{12} + \mathbf{F}_{21} + d\mathbf{P}_{\text{EM}}/dt = 0$ where $\mathbf{P}_{\text{EM}} = \int \mathbf{E} \times \mathbf{B} d\text{Vol}/4\pi c$ (in Gaussian units, with c as the speed of light in vacuum) is the electromagnetic-field momentum associated with the two dipoles.¹ This is an example of a general result by Page and Adams [2], published many years ago, in the so-called Darwin approximation [3]² that keeps terms only to order v^2/c^2 (which ignores electromagnetic radiation), where \mathbf{v} is velocity.³ Narayan’s demonstration is nice in that it holds to all orders of v/c .

However, Narayan mistakenly claimed that there are “no electromagnetic fields in the far field zone”, and hence “no radiation is emitted” in his example, based on the appearance of his eqs. (2) and (3). While those forms are convenient for later computation, they do not well display the character of the electromagnetic fields of a time-dependent dipole. This was the topic of the Appendix of [7],⁴ where the magnetic field of a time-dependent electric dipole $\mathbf{p}(t)$ (at the origin) was shown to be $\mathbf{B}(\mathbf{r}, t) = [\ddot{\mathbf{p}}] \times \hat{\mathbf{r}}/c^2 r + [\dot{\mathbf{p}}] \times \hat{\mathbf{r}}/c r^2$ with $[\mathbf{p}] = \mathbf{p}(t - r/c)$. The term that varies as $1/r$ is a “radiation” field, nonzero except in the limit $t \rightarrow -\infty$ when the dipole moment is zero by construction. The radiation pattern of Narayan’s two dipoles can be computed using eq. (66.6) of [4] and Fig. 1 of [1] (shown below) where $\hat{\mathbf{x}}_1 = \hat{\mathbf{x}}$ and where $\hat{\mathbf{x}}_2 = \hat{\mathbf{y}}$, noting also that $\hat{\mathbf{r}} = \sin \theta \cos \phi \hat{\mathbf{x}} + \sin \theta \sin \phi \hat{\mathbf{y}} + \cos \theta \hat{\mathbf{z}}$,

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dI}{d\Omega} &= \frac{c r^2 [\mathbf{B}_{\text{rad}}]^2}{4\pi} = \frac{[(\ddot{\mathbf{p}}_1 + \ddot{\mathbf{p}}_2) \times \hat{\mathbf{r}}]^2}{4\pi c^3} = \frac{\lambda^4 [(p_1 \hat{\mathbf{x}} + p_2 \hat{\mathbf{y}}) \times \hat{\mathbf{r}}]^2}{4\pi c^3} \\ &= \frac{\lambda^4 [(p_1^2 + p_2^2) \cos^2 \theta + (p_1 \sin \phi - p_2 \cos \phi)^2 \sin^2 \theta]}{4\pi c^3}. \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$



Then, the total intensity, integrated over solid angle, is $I = 2\lambda^4 [p_1^2 + p_2^2]/3c^3$.⁵

¹We exclude the self-momentum of moving charges, and consider only the interaction field momentum.

²See also §65 of [4] and sec. 12.6 of [5].

³See also [6].

⁴See also the Appendix to [8].

⁵The electric-dipole radiation follows from eq. (67.8) of [4] as $I_{\text{E1}} = 2[\ddot{\mathbf{p}}]^2/3c^3 = 2\lambda^4 [\mathbf{p}_1 + \mathbf{p}_2]^2/3c^3 = 2\lambda^4 [p_1^2 + p_2^2]/3c^3$, which is the same as the total intensity.

We can also consider the radiated momentum $d\mathbf{P}_{\text{rad}}/dt = \int d\Omega (d^2\mathbf{P}_{\text{rad}}/dt d\Omega)$,⁶ where $d^2\mathbf{P}_{\text{rad}}/dt d\Omega = (c \hat{\mathbf{r}}/4\pi) dI/d\Omega$. Recalling eq. (1), we find that although $d^2\mathbf{P}_{\text{rad}}/dt d\Omega$ is nonzero, the total radiated momentum $d\mathbf{P}_{\text{rad}}/dt$ is zero.

In a larger historical context, Ampère’s insistence that magnetic forces obey Newton’s 3rd law earned him the sobriquet by Maxwell [10] of the “Newton of electricity”. Ampère’s authority held up acceptance of the “Lorentz” force law (stated obliquely by Maxwell in 1861 [11]) until efforts by Thomson [13] and Heaviside [15] in 1891 clarified that electromagnetic fields carry momentum as well as energy (following the first clear statement of the “Lorentz” force law by Heaviside in 1885 [18]⁷).

In 1864, Maxwell discussed “electromagnetic momentum”, identifying this with Faraday’s “electronic state” in sec. 26 of [23], and clarifying in sec. 57 that the “electromagnetic momentum” of charge q in an external vector potential \mathbf{A} is $q\mathbf{A}/c$ (in the Coulomb gauge, as favored by Maxwell). This formulation suggests that “electromagnetic momentum” is a property of the charge, rather than of the electromagnetic field. That Maxwell’s “electromagnetic momentum” is equivalent to the electromagnetic-field momentum of Thomson and Heaviside (the \mathbf{P}_{EM} of this note) in quasistatic examples was first demonstrated by Thomson [24]. See also [25, 26, 27].

Appendix: Onoochin’s Variant

This Appendix is based on analysis by David Griffiths.

Vladimir Onoochin (private communication) has proposed a variant of Narayan’s example, again with two time-dependent electric dipoles, for which the current density of the dipole at the origin can be written as,

$$\mathbf{J}_i(\mathbf{r}, t) = I_i dl_i e^{\lambda t} \delta^3(\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}_i) \hat{\mathbf{x}}_i, \quad (2)$$

with $\mathbf{r}_1 = 0$ and $\mathbf{r}_2 = a \hat{\mathbf{x}}$. The continuity equation then says,

$$\frac{\partial \rho_i}{\partial t} = -\nabla \cdot \mathbf{J}_i = -I_i dl_i e^{\lambda t} \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i), \quad (3)$$

where $\mathbf{R}_i = \mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}_i$. This integrates to,

$$\rho_i(\mathbf{r}, t) = -I_i dl_i \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i) \int e^{\lambda t} dt = -I_i dl_i \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i) \left[\frac{e^{\lambda t}}{\lambda} + k_i(\mathbf{r}) \right], \quad (4)$$

for some $k_i(\mathbf{r})$ independent of time t . Narayan stipulated that “all sources” (including ρ_i) have the time dependence $e^{\lambda t}$, and hence tacitly assumed that $k_i = 0$,

$$\rho_{\text{N},i}(\mathbf{r}, t) = -I_i dl_i \frac{e^{\lambda t}}{\lambda} \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i), \quad (5)$$

⁶See, for example, p. 3 of [9].

⁷In 1846, the first force law between moving charges was given by Weber as $\mathbf{F} = q_1 q_2 (1 - \dot{r}^2/2c^2 + r\ddot{r}/c^2) \hat{\mathbf{r}}/r^2$, p. 375 of [19], which obeys Newton’s 3rd law. In 1881, Thomson wrote the magnetic force on charge q as $q\mathbf{v} \times \mathbf{B}/2c$ in eq. (5) of [20]. In 1895, Lorentz wrote “his” force law as $\mathbf{F} = q(\mathbf{D} + \mathbf{v}/c \times \mathbf{H})$ in eq. (V), p. 21, of [21], although he seems mainly to have considered its use in vacuum where $\mathbf{D} = \mathbf{E}$ and $\mathbf{H} = \mathbf{B}$. See also eq. (23), p. 14, of [22].

as in eq. (5) of [1]. In contrast, Onoochin chose $k_i = -1/\lambda$, which leads to,

$$\rho_{O,i}(\mathbf{r}, t) = -I_i dl_i \left[\frac{e^{\lambda t} - 1}{\lambda} \right] \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i), \quad (6)$$

and considered the limit $\lambda \rightarrow 0$,

$$\rho_{O,i}(\mathbf{r}, t) = -I_i dl_i t \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i), \quad \mathbf{J}_{O,i}(\mathbf{r}, t) = I_i dl_i \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i) \hat{\mathbf{x}}_i. \quad (7)$$

In Onoochin's variant, the electric charge density $\rho_{O,i}$ depends linearly on time while the current density $\mathbf{J}_{O,i}$ is independent of time. These conditions were called "semistatic" in sec. III of [28], for which case the electric and magnetic fields can be computed using the instantaneous Coulomb and Biot-Savart laws (without retardation).

The electric-dipole moment in Onoochin's variant is, omitting the subscript O from now on,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{p}_i(t) &= \int \rho_i(\mathbf{r}, t) \mathbf{r} d^3\mathbf{r} = -I_i dl_i t \int \left[\frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i) \right] \mathbf{r} d^3\mathbf{r} \\ &= I_i dl_i t \int \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i) \frac{\partial \mathbf{r}}{\partial x_i} d^3\mathbf{r} = I_i dl_i t \hat{\mathbf{x}}_i. \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

The electromagnetic fields follow⁸ as the instantaneous electric-dipole field,

$$\mathbf{E}_i(\mathbf{r}, t) = \frac{3(\mathbf{p}_i \cdot \hat{\mathbf{R}}_i) \hat{\mathbf{R}}_i - \mathbf{p}_i}{R_i^3} - \frac{4\pi}{3} \mathbf{p}_i \delta^3(\mathbf{R}_i), \quad (9)$$

and the Biot-Savart magnetic field,

$$\mathbf{B}_i(\mathbf{r}, t) = \int \frac{\mathbf{J}_i(\mathbf{r}', t) \times \hat{\mathbf{R}}_i'}{cR_i'^2} d^3\mathbf{r}' = \frac{I_i dl_i \hat{\mathbf{x}}_i \times \hat{\mathbf{R}}_i}{cR_i^2}, \quad (10)$$

where $\mathbf{R}' = \mathbf{r}' - \mathbf{r}_i$. There is no radiation associated with Onoochin's "semistatic" variant.

Turning to the full configuration with two electric dipoles according to Onoochin's variant, as in the figure on p. 1 above, with $\mathbf{p}_1 = I_1 dl_1 t \hat{\mathbf{x}}$ at $\mathbf{r}_1 = 0$ and $\mathbf{p}_2 = I_2 dl_2 t \hat{\mathbf{y}}$ at $\mathbf{r}_2 = a \hat{\mathbf{x}}$, the total electric force on the two dipoles is zero, since Coulomb's law obeys Newton's 3rd law. However, the total magnetic force is nonzero,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{F}_{\text{tot}} &= \mathbf{F}_{12} + \mathbf{F}_{21} = \int \frac{\mathbf{J}_1}{c} \times \mathbf{B}_2 d\text{Vol} + \int \frac{\mathbf{J}_2}{c} \times \mathbf{B}_1 d\text{Vol} \\ &= \frac{I_1 dl_1 \hat{\mathbf{x}}}{c} \times \left(\frac{I_2 dl_2 \hat{\mathbf{y}} \times (-\hat{\mathbf{x}})}{ca^2} \right) + \frac{I_2 dl_2 \hat{\mathbf{y}}}{c} \times \left(\frac{I_2 dl_1 \hat{\mathbf{x}} \times \hat{\mathbf{x}}}{ca^2} \right) = -\frac{(I_1 dl_1)(I_2 dl_2)}{a^2 c^2} \hat{\mathbf{y}}. \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

The interaction field momentum is, recalling that $\mathbf{R}_1 = \mathbf{r}$ and $\mathbf{R}_2 = \mathbf{r} - a \hat{\mathbf{x}} \equiv \mathbf{r}'$,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{P}_{\text{EM}} &= \int \frac{\mathbf{E}_1 \times \mathbf{B}_2 + \mathbf{E}_2 \times \mathbf{B}_1}{4\pi c} d\text{Vol} \\ &= \frac{(I_1 dl_1)(I_2 dl_2)t}{4\pi c^2} \int \left[\left(\frac{3(\hat{\mathbf{x}} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}) \hat{\mathbf{r}} - \hat{\mathbf{x}}}{r^3} - \frac{4\pi}{3} \hat{\mathbf{x}} \delta^3(\mathbf{r}) \right) \times \frac{\hat{\mathbf{y}} \times \mathbf{r}'}{r'^3} \right. \\ &\quad \left. + \left(\frac{3(\hat{\mathbf{y}} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}') \hat{\mathbf{r}}' - \hat{\mathbf{y}}}{r'^3} - \frac{4\pi}{3} \hat{\mathbf{y}} \delta^3(\mathbf{r} - a \hat{\mathbf{x}}) \right) \times \frac{\hat{\mathbf{x}} \times \mathbf{r}}{r^3} \right] d\text{Vol}. \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

⁸These fields also follow from the Appendix of [7], and eqs. (46)-(47) of [29].

To evaluate the integral, we adopt a spherical coordinate system (r, θ, ϕ) with the x -axis as the polar axis, and,

$$\mathbf{r} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{x}} = r \cos \theta, \quad \mathbf{r} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{y}} = r \sin \theta \cos \phi, \quad \mathbf{r} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{z}} = r \sin \theta \sin \phi. \quad (13)$$

Then, $r' = \sqrt{r^2 - 2ar \cos \theta + a^2}$,

$$\mathbf{r}' \cdot \hat{\mathbf{x}} = r \cos \theta - a, \quad \mathbf{r}' \cdot \hat{\mathbf{y}} = r \sin \theta \cos \phi, \quad \mathbf{r}' \cdot \mathbf{r} = r^2 - ar \cos \theta, \quad (14)$$

and,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{P}_{\text{EM}} &= \frac{(I_1 dl_1)(I_2 dl_2) t}{4\pi c^2} \left[\frac{8\pi}{3a^2} \hat{\mathbf{y}} + \int d\text{Vol} \frac{[2r \cos \theta + a(1 - 3 \cos^2 \theta)] \hat{\mathbf{y}} - 3 \sin \theta \cos \theta \cos \phi (\mathbf{r} - a \hat{\mathbf{x}})}{r^3 r'^3} \right. \\ &\quad \left. + \int d\text{Vol} \frac{r \sin \theta \cos \phi [3(r^2 - ar \cos \theta)/r'^2 - 1] \hat{\mathbf{x}} - 3r \sin \theta \cos \phi (r \cos \theta - a) \mathbf{r}/r'^2}{r^3 r'^3} \right] \\ &= \frac{(I_1 dl_1)(I_2 dl_2) t}{4\pi c^2} \hat{\mathbf{y}} \left[\frac{4\pi}{3a^2} + 2\pi \int_0^\infty dr \int_{-1}^1 d \cos \theta \frac{2r \cos \theta + a(1 - 3 \cos^2 \theta) - (3/2)r \sin \theta \cos \theta}{r'^3} \right. \\ &\quad \left. - 3\pi \int_0^\infty dr \int_{-1}^1 d \cos \theta \frac{r \sin \theta \cos \theta (r \cos \theta - a)}{r'^5} \right]. \end{aligned} \quad (15)$$

These integrals are difficult to evaluate, but of possible interest is that the delta function in the electric field at the center of “point” dipole 1 contributes to the total field momentum, but the delta function of dipole 2 does not.⁹

As Onoochin’s variant is “semistatic”, we can also compute the field momentum via Maxwell’s formulation [27], $\mathbf{P}_{\text{EM}} = \sum q_j \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{r}_j)/c$. We see that the (Coulomb-gauge) vector potential of dipole 1 is the same at the position of both charges of dipole 2, and so does not contribute to the momentum. The vector potential of dipole 2 along the x -axis is $\mathbf{A}_2(x) = I_2 dl_2 \hat{\mathbf{y}}/c |a - x|$, so the electromagnetic momentum is,

$$\mathbf{P}_{\text{EM}} = \frac{q_1 dl_1}{c} \frac{d\mathbf{A}_2(0)}{dx} = \frac{(I_1 dl_1)(I_2 dl_2) t \hat{\mathbf{y}}}{a^2 c^2}, \quad (19)$$

⁹For completeness, we consider the field momentum of Onoochin’s dipole 1, for which $\mathbf{p}_1 = I_1 dl_1 t \hat{\mathbf{x}}$, and its electromagnetic fields are, recalling eqs. (9)-(10) with $\mathbf{r}_1 = 0$,

$$\mathbf{E}_1(\mathbf{r}, t) = \frac{3(\mathbf{p}_1 \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}) \hat{\mathbf{r}} - \mathbf{p}_1}{r^3} - \frac{4\pi}{3} \mathbf{p}_1 \delta^3(\mathbf{r}), \quad \mathbf{B}_1(\mathbf{r}, t) = \frac{I_1 dl_1 \hat{\mathbf{x}} \times \hat{\mathbf{r}}}{c r^2}. \quad (16)$$

The field momentum of this dipole is, recalling eq. (13),

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{P}_{\text{EM},1} &= \int \frac{\mathbf{E}_1 \times \mathbf{B}_1}{4\pi c} d\text{Vol} = \frac{(I_1 dl_1)^2 t}{4\pi c^2} \int \frac{[3(\hat{\mathbf{x}} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}) \hat{\mathbf{r}} - \hat{\mathbf{x}}] \times (\hat{\mathbf{x}} \times \hat{\mathbf{r}})}{r^5} d\text{Vol} \\ &= \frac{(I_1 dl_1)^2 t}{4\pi c^2} \int \frac{[3(\hat{\mathbf{x}} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}) \hat{\mathbf{r}} - \hat{\mathbf{x}}] \times (\hat{\mathbf{x}} \times \hat{\mathbf{r}})}{r^5} d\text{Vol} \\ &= \frac{(I_1 dl_1)^2 t}{4\pi c^2} \int \frac{3(\hat{\mathbf{x}} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}})[\hat{\mathbf{x}} - (\hat{\mathbf{x}} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}) \hat{\mathbf{r}}] - (\hat{\mathbf{x}} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}) \hat{\mathbf{x}} + \hat{\mathbf{r}}}{r^5} d\text{Vol} = 0. \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

Alternatively, we can compute the field momentum using Maxwell’s form,

$$\mathbf{P}_{\text{EM},1} = \frac{q_1 \mathbf{A}(x = dl_1/2) - q_1 \mathbf{A}(x = -dl_1/2)}{c} = \frac{(q_1 - q_1) I_1 dl_1 \hat{\mathbf{x}}}{c^2 dl_1/2} = 0. \quad (18)$$

Similarly, the field momentum of dipole 2 is zero.

noting that $q_1 = I_1 t$.

Recalling eq. (11), we now have that $\mathbf{F}_{12} + \mathbf{F}_{21} + d\mathbf{P}_{EM}/dt = 0$, as expected. With the use of Maxwell's form for electromagnetic momentum, this demonstration for Onoochin's variant is much quicker than for Narayan's version of two time-dependent dipoles.

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