



# **Chemical Bonds Outside Metal Surfaces**

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# **Chemical Bonds Outside Metal Surfaces**

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# Preface

The problem of molecules interacting with metal surfaces has for a very long time been recognized to be of considerable technological as well as fundamental importance. Thus in the former category, a substantial number of important synthetic reactions for industrial purposes make use of metal surfaces as catalysts. Or again, problems of corrosion of metals are of great practical importance, such as in nuclear-reactor technology [see, for instance, my earlier articles, in: *Physics Bulletin*, Volume 25, p. 582, Institute of Physics, UK (1974); and in: *Physics and Contemporary Needs* (Riazuddin, ed.), Vol. 1, p. 53, Plenum Press, New York (1977)]. It is therefore of significance to strive to gain a more fundamental understanding of the atomic, and ultimately the electronic, processes that occur when a molecule is brought into the proximity of a metal surface.

The present volume focuses mainly on the theory and concepts involved; however, it is intended for readers in chemistry, physics, and materials science who are not specialists in theory but nevertheless wish to learn more about this truly interdisciplinary area of theoretical science. The aim of the book is to present the way in which valence theory can be synthesized with the understanding of metals that has been gained over the last half century or so. While advanced theory has at times been necessary, the detail is largely presented in an extensive set of Appendixes. Very occasionally, when such theory appears in the main text, the reader has usually been advised what to omit if he is merely interested in the main predictions of the theoretical arguments.

My indebtedness to many other workers will rapidly become evident to the readers of this book. Special thanks are due to my former research students: Drs. Richard C. Brown [see, for instance, *Phys. Rep.* **24C**, 77 (1976)], the late Ian D. Moore, Ilana Gabbay, John S. McCaskill, and Kathie R. Painter, as well as to Messrs. Peter J. Hiatt and Kevin Joyce, who were Part II students in Theoretical Chemistry at Oxford. Invaluable help and advice in the general area covered by this book were provided by my

friends and colleagues: Drs. Peter Grout, Don Richardson, and Gaetano Senatore, and also Professors Fernando Flores, “Jay” Mahanty, and Mario Tosi. Regular visits to the Theoretical Physics Division at AERE Harwell over many years have kept me in touch with the materials-science problems related to nuclear technology and thanks are due to Dr. A. B. Lidiard and his colleagues for the stimulation and motivation provided by these visits.

While I must, of course, accept sole responsibility for the contents of this book, and indeed no other person has read more than an individual chapter, it is a pleasure to thank Mr. Richard G. Chapman in Oxford, Dr. C. J. Wright (Harwell, UK), and Professor Z. W. Gortel at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, for helpful comments on parts of the manuscript. Should any readers find my book sufficiently interesting and be willing to trouble themselves, I would be most grateful to be told where I might improve the presentation, or where, I trust only very occasionally, I have misunderstood or erred in emphasis or judgment.

It is also a pleasure to thank all the authors who have generously allowed the reproduction of figures from their papers (the references are cited in the caption in each such case), and especially Dr. R. M. Lambert, Cambridge, UK, for supplying the original of Figure 6.3. Last, but by no means least, Professor H. Suhl very kindly acted as host for my visit to the University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, during a sabbatical leave granted by the University of Oxford. To him, his group of research students, and his colleague Dr. R. Kariotis, go my warm thanks for the opportunity to complete this book in an ideally quiet and scholarly atmosphere.

*N. H. March*

# Contents

<b>1. Background, Phenomenology, and Motivation</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Chemisorption in Ionic and Covalent Limits	2
1.1.1. Ionic Bond Formation	3
1.1.2. Covalently Bonded Cases	3
1.2. Kinetics of Adsorption and Desorption	5
1.3. Thermodynamics of Adsorption	8
1.3.1. Langmuir Isotherm	8
1.3.2. Multilayer Adsorption Theory	11
1.4. Reaction Mechanisms Outside Surfaces	12
1.4.1. Langmuir–Hinshelwood and Rideal–Eley Mechanisms	13
1.4.2. Redhead Equation for Desorption Rate	13
1.5. Case History of Catalytic Hydrogenation of Carbon Monoxide	15
1.5.1. Thermodynamics	15
1.5.2. Chemisorption Studies of CO and H <sub>2</sub>	17
1.5.3. Selectivity	18
1.5.4. Mechanism	20
<b>2. Diatomic Molecules</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1. Physisorbed Diatoms with Well-Defined Cores	23
2.1.1. Image Theory of the Dispersion Force	25
2.2. Interaction Between Two Hydrogen Atoms	28
2.2.1. Physisorbed H <sub>2</sub>	28
2.2.2. Protons Embedded in the Spill-Out Metal Electron Cloud	31
2.3. Interaction Energy: Tight-Binding Model	34
2.3.1. Range of Validity: Anisotropic Effects, Adatom-Substrate Coupling, and Energy-Level Matching	36
2.4. Molecular Versus Dissociative Adsorption	38



2.4.1.	Pauling's Treatment of Bond Energies . . . . .	38
2.4.2.	Bonding and Valence in Transition Metals . . . . .	39
2.4.3.	Admolecule Bonding to a Metal Surface . . . . .	41
2.4.4.	Chemisorption of N <sub>2</sub> , O <sub>2</sub> , CO, and NO . . . . .	42
2.5.	Detailed Bonding Studies . . . . .	47
2.5.1.	Nitrogen on Metal Surfaces . . . . .	47
2.5.2.	Cluster Modeling of NO on Ni . . . . .	48
2.5.3.	Limitations and Convergence Properties of Cluster Calculations . . . . .	49
2.6.	Electronically Excited States of Chemisorbed Diatoms . . . . .	50
2.6.1.	EELS Study of Weakly Adsorbed Systems . . . . .	51
2.6.2.	Summary of Assignments . . . . .	52
2.7.	Orientation of Molecular Adsorbates . . . . .	52
2.8.	Temperature Effects, and Comparison Between Theory and Experiment . . . . .	55

### **3. Conformation and Electronic Structure of Polyatomic Molecules . . . . . 57**

3.1.	Conformation of a Water Molecule Outside a Metal Surface . . . . .	58
3.1.1.	Valence Theory of Free-Space Conformation . . . . .	59
3.1.2.	Interaction Energy in a Water Molecule . . . . .	59
3.1.3.	Introduction of the Image Potential . . . . .	63
3.1.4.	Effect of the Surface on Hybridization . . . . .	65
3.1.5.	Results and Discussion . . . . .	67
3.2.	Conformation of NH <sub>3</sub> and C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>4</sub> Molecules . . . . .	70
3.2.1.	Interaction Between Lone Pair and Image for NH <sub>3</sub> . . . . .	70
3.2.2.	Adsorption of Ethylene on a Planar Metal Surface . . . . .	72
3.2.3.	Cluster Approach to the Electronic-Level Structure of Ethylene on Ni(100) . . . . .	75
3.3.	Molecular Versus Dissociative Adsorption of NH <sub>3</sub> on Transition-Metal Surfaces . . . . .	75
3.4.	Electronic Structure and Conformation of Ethene on Transition- and Noble-Metal Surfaces . . . . .	76
3.4.1.	Conformation of Ethene on Metal Surfaces . . . . .	77
3.4.2.	Tight-Binding Model of $\sigma$ -Levels of Adsorbed Ethene . . . . .	80
3.4.3.	Effect of the Surface on $\sigma$ -Levels . . . . .	80
3.4.4.	$\pi$ -Orbital Bonding and Charge Transfer Between Molecule and Metal . . . . .	82
3.5.	Interaction Between Adsorbates . . . . .	87
3.5.1.	Hydrogen-Bonded Clusters of H <sub>2</sub> O . . . . .	87

3.5.2. Some Organic Molecules . . . . .	87
3.6. Electronic Excited States of Chemisorbed Polyatomic Molecules . . . . .	88
<b>4. Dynamics of Adparticles and Neutron Inelastic Scattering . . . . .</b>	<b>91</b>
4.1. Principles of Neutron Scattering from Adsorbed Molecules . . . . .	92
4.2. Comparison With Other Surface Techniques . . . . .	92
4.3. Diffusion Measurements . . . . .	93
4.4. Theory . . . . .	94
4.4.1. Influence of Diffusion on Scattering Cross-Section . . . . .	95
4.5. Electronic and Vibration–Rotation Spectra of Adsorbed Molecules . . . . .	96
4.6. Adsorbate Frequency Shifts . . . . .	97
4.6.1. Influence of $n$ -Fold Coordination . . . . .	97
4.6.2. Intensity in Local Mode at Adsorbate Site . . . . .	100
4.7. Theoretical Framework for Interpreting Neutron Inelastic Scattering From Covered Surfaces . . . . .	102
4.7.1. Description of the Model . . . . .	103
4.7.2. Coupling of an Adparticle to a Two-Dimensional Square Lattice . . . . .	105
4.7.3. Interpretation of Neutron Intensity for Hydrogen on Platinum . . . . .	107
4.8. Theory of Surface Diffusion . . . . .	108
4.9. Vibration Excitation in Molecule–Surface Collisions Due to Temporary Negative Molecular-Ion Formation . . . . .	109
4.10. Adparticle Dynamics: Kramers' Equation in a Metallic Medium . . . . .	110
4.10.1. Electronic Contribution to the Surface-Friction Constant . . . . .	112
4.10.2. Introduction of Inhomogeneity at a Metal Surface . . . . .	113
4.10.3. Long-Range Dynamic Interaction Between Adatoms . . . . .	117
<b>5. Molecular Desorption . . . . .</b>	<b>121</b>
5.1. Kramers' Theory Generalized to Desorption From Solid Surfaces . . . . .	122
5.1.1. Derivation of the Rate Equation . . . . .	124

5.1.2.	Rate of Desorption of Atoms . . . . .	125
5.1.3.	Rate of Desorption of Molecules . . . . .	127
5.1.4.	Results: Atomic and Molecular Desorption . . . . .	129
5.2.	Transition-State Theory Applied to Desorption From Solid Surfaces: Ammonia on Ni(111) . . . . .	132
5.2.1.	Rate of Molecular Desorption . . . . .	133
5.3.	Microscopic Theories . . . . .	135
5.3.1.	One-Phonon Approximation . . . . .	136
5.3.2.	Atom-Phonon Interaction . . . . .	139
5.4.	Quantum-Statistical Theory of Physisorption . . . . .	144
5.4.1.	Flash Desorption . . . . .	145
5.4.2.	Isothermal Desorption . . . . .	148
5.4.3.	Limitations of the Relaxation-Time Approach to Desorption . . . . .	149
5.5.	Coverage-Dependent Regime . . . . .	150
5.5.1.	Mean-Field Theory of Physisorption . . . . .	151
5.5.2.	Kramers' Theory . . . . .	154
5.6.	Desorption Induced by Electronic Transitions . . . . .	161
5.6.1.	Menzel-Gomer-Redhead Model . . . . .	161
5.6.2.	Knotek-Feibelman Mechanism of Initial Excitation . . . . .	166
5.6.3.	Structural Information From Photon-Stimulated Desorption . . . . .	167
5.6.4.	Theory of Angle-Resolved Electron- and Photon-Stimulated Desorption . . . . .	168
5.6.5.	Electron-Stimulated Molecular Desorption From Metals . . . . .	170
<b>6.</b>	<b>Catalysis . . . . .</b>	<b>171</b>
6.1.	Some Definitions and Concepts . . . . .	172
6.1.1.	Specific Rate . . . . .	172
6.1.2.	Reaction Probability . . . . .	173
6.1.3.	Elementary Reaction Steps . . . . .	175
6.2.	XPS Studies of Desorption and Dissociation Processes. . . . .	176
6.2.1.	Photoelectron Spectroscopy in Relation to Heterogeneous Catalysis . . . . .	177
6.3.	Compensation Effect . . . . .	179
6.3.1.	Theoretical Basis . . . . .	181
6.3.2.	Compensation Temperature $T_c$ . . . . .	184
6.4.	Relevance of Woodward-Hoffmann Rules to Single-Crystal Catalysts . . . . .	185

6.4.1. Classification of Symmetry-Allowed or Forbidden Reactions . . . . .	186
6.4.2. Symmetry-Conservation Rules . . . . .	187
6.4.3. Use of a Correlation Diagram in Understanding the Activation Barrier . . . . .	187
6.4.4. Can Symmetry Effects Alone Explain Nitric-Oxide Decomposition on Platinum? . . . . .	190
6.5. Electronic Structure Study of a "Poisoned" Catalyst Surface . . . . .	192
6.6. Chemical Oscillations . . . . .	193
6.6.1. Nature of Rate Equations . . . . .	194

## Appendixes . . . . . 199

1.1. Surface Characterization Techniques Used to Determine Structure and Composition of Solid Surfaces . . . . .	199
2.1. Density Matrix and Linear-Response Function of the Infinite-Barrier Model of a Metal Surface . . . . .	200
2.2. Influence of Fermi-Surface Topology on Asymptotic Displaced-Charge Round Adatoms . . . . .	202
2.3. Correlation Effects for Hydrogen Chemisorbed on Transition Metals . . . . .	203
2.4. Lifetimes of Excited States of Molecules Well Outside Metal Surfaces: a Model Calculation . . . . .	205
3.1. Bonding of Water Molecules to Pt: a Model of the Ice- <i>d</i> -Electron Metal Interface . . . . .	209
3.2. Parametrization of the Tight-Binding Model of Ethene . . . . .	212
3.3. Parametrization of the Anderson Hamiltonian Describing the $\pi$ -Energy Levels of the Free Ethene Molecule . . . . .	213
3.4. Nonmagnetic Hartree-Fock Solution to the Hamiltonian Representing Chemisorption of the $\pi$ -Electrons on a <i>d</i> -Metal . . . . .	215
4.1. Three-Dimensional Treatment of the Escape of a Brownian Particle From a Well . . . . .	216
4.2. Dynamics of a Brownian Particle in a Fluid: Derivation of Stochastic Elements . . . . .	219
4.3. Variational Principle for the Optimum Reaction Coordinate in Diffusion-Controlled Reactions . . . . .	225
4.4. Anisotropic Screening of an Adatom Near a Metal Surface . . . . .	229
5.1. Spin Fluctuations and Desorption of Hydrogen From Paramagnetic Metals . . . . .	234
5.2. Anomalies in Adsorption Equilibrium Near Critical Points of a Substrate . . . . .	235

6.1. Symmetry Rules Based on the Surface Electronic Structure of Various Platinum Surfaces . . . . .	239
6.2. Local Density of States, Scattering Theory, and the <i>T</i> -Matrix . . . . .	242
6.3. Analysis of Rate Equations Describing Chemical Oscillations . . . . .	246
6.4. Proposed Reaction Sequence for Fischer–Tropsch Synthesis . . . . .	251
6.5. Dissociative Chemisorption — A Primitive Surface Chemical Process . . . . .	252
6.6. Nonlinear Rate Equations and the Compensation Effect . . . . .	254

<b>Notes Added in Proof . . . . .</b>	<b>259</b>
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<b>References . . . . .</b>	<b>267</b>
-----------------------------	------------

<b>Index . . . . .</b>	<b>279</b>
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## Chapter 1

# Background, Phenomenology, and Motivation

The description of a chemical bond in interaction with a metal surface has long been a matter of concern for both fundamental theory and technology. Ideally, of course, such a description should take account of both the detailed electronic structure of the metal, including its surface, and the valence theory of the molecule involved. There has been a good deal of progress in implementing this program, but so far it has proved possible to carry out this task only by very lengthy numerical procedures.

Therefore, it is plainly of interest to seek simpler methods, starting from the most basic approximations of valence theory, and then incorporating the proximity of the metal surface by means of approximate concepts, such as image theory applied to a perfect electric conductor. Such a procedure, as discussed in Chapter 2 for diatoms, makes sense when the molecule is well outside the electron cloud spilling out from the metal surface, i.e., in the physisorbed regime, but needs refinement and extension in the face of chemical interaction between molecule and metal (e.g., the case of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  on ruthenium metal, treated at some length in Chapter 3).

However, even if such a program, combining the electronic band theory (allowing for Coulomb interactions between electrons) of the metal surface with the finest available wave functions for the molecular electrons, were tractable eventually by largely analytical theory, it would still not make very close contact with many of the important questions for chemical physics and materials science. This is because dynamics, rather than static conformational theory, is a major ingredient in any attempt to answer

many salient questions in this area, such as desorption rates from metal surfaces and the way the rates of chemical reactions can be dramatically changed in the presence of catalytic metal surfaces.

To emphasize this perspective, we shall first discuss the background to the kinetics of adsorption and desorption after an elementary introduction to the problem of chemisorption in two limiting cases. In addition to their intrinsic interest, such investigations of kinetics frequently lead to valuable information concerning the nature of bonding in the adsorbed phase. A short introduction to reaction mechanisms outside surfaces follows.

One of the long-term aims of any theory of chemical bonds outside metal surfaces must be a comprehensive first-principles theory of catalytic reactions, as already implied above. Though no such complete theory exists at the time of writing, it is important for motivating and furthering work in the area covered by the present book to recognize both the types of problem that will be encountered, as well as the salient features that any useful theory must eventually embrace. Therefore, we felt it important in this introductory chapter, and following the lead given by Spencer and Somorjai in their important review on catalysis, to present the “case history” of one important catalytic process: the hydrogenation of carbon monoxide. This is then complemented in the final chapter by, first, an introduction to definitions and concepts of importance in catalysis, and second, a discussion of some selected topics in the modern theory of catalysis, chosen to throw light on basic principles (such as orbital symmetry conservation), which may perhaps, eventually, be taken over successfully from free-space chemical-reaction theory (e.g., Woodward–Hoffmann rules) into reaction theory outside metal surfaces. We have in this way endeavored to include in this book enough exemplary material for scientists in the boundary regions between physics, chemistry, and materials science to recognize just what factors one may eventually be forced to incorporate into the theory in order to understand fully the rich variety of phenomena encountered in the processes of catalysis.

With this general introduction, we shall next briefly review a little of the relevant historical background to the quantitative study of molecules outside metal surfaces, to be treated in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

## 1.1. CHEMISORPTION IN IONIC AND COVALENT LIMITS

As a prelude to the more quantitative studies of diatoms and polyatomic molecules adsorbed on metal surfaces, to be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, it is natural that the early work focused on the limiting cases of purely ionic and purely covalent bonding.<sup>(1)</sup>

### 1.1.1. Ionic Bond Formation

The formation of an ionic bond was thought to comprise two stages:

1. An electron transfer from the gas molecule to the surface.
2. The gas ion approaches the surface until the equilibrium separation is attained.

The transfer of an electron from the gas molecule to the surface involves an energy gain of  $W - I$ , where  $W$  is the work function and  $I$  the ionization potential. For a pure ionic bond, the heat of adsorption,  $Q_0$  say, is given approximately by

$$Q_0 = N_A(W - I + e^2/4r_0) \tag{1.1.1}$$

where  $N_A$  denotes Avogadro's number. The final term in equation (1.1.1) already invokes image theory (also utilized in some detail in the next two chapters) to write the energy of attraction needed to bring the ion within the ionic radius  $r_0$  of the surface. In Table 1.1, the values calculated in this way are compared with the experimental values for alkali-metal atoms on tungsten. There is fair agreement, and the same is found for molybdenum, etc., such systems having been treated, for example, by Moesta.<sup>(2)</sup>

### 1.1.2. Covalently Bonded Cases

When one turns to the adsorption of gases such as hydrogen or oxygen on metallic surfaces, an equation such as (1.1.1) is no longer of any use. Here one must consider the other limiting case, namely that of purely covalent bonding.

Early work, summarized for instance by Wedler,<sup>(3)</sup> expressed the heat

TABLE 1.1. Calculated and Experimental Heats of Chemisorption for Alkali Metal Atoms on Tungsten<sup>a</sup>

System	$N_A W$	$N_A I$	$N_A e^2/4r_0$	$Q_0^{\text{calc}}$	$Q_0^{\text{exp}}$
Na on W	104	118	45	31	32
K on W	104	100	36	40	—
Cs on W	104	89	31	46	64

<sup>a</sup> The model for calculation is the purely ionic limit, based on equation (1.1.1), and units are kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>.



of adsorption for, say, the case of hydrogen as

$$Q_0 = 2E_{\text{Me-H}} - E_{\text{H-H}} \quad (1.1.2)$$

where  $E_{\text{Me-H}}$  and  $E_{\text{H-H}}$  are the bond energies for the adsorbed phase and for hydrogen, respectively. Then  $E_{\text{Me-H}}$  can be evaluated following Pauling<sup>(4)</sup> in the form

$$E_{\text{Me-H}} = \frac{1}{2}(E_{\text{Me-Me}} + E_{\text{H-H}}) + 23.06(x_{\text{Me}} - x_{\text{H}})^2 \quad (1.1.3)$$

where the last term involving the electronegativity difference allows for the ionic contribution of the bond. The quantity  $E_{\text{Me-Me}}$  is obtained from the heat of sublimation  $H_s$ , say, by setting

$$E_{\text{Me-Me}} = \frac{2}{12}H_s \quad (1.1.4)$$

in the case of a face-centered-cubic metal with twelve nearest neighbors. The heat of adsorption is then derived by combining equations (1.1.2) and (1.1.3) to yield

$$Q_0 = E_{\text{Me-Me}} + 46.1(x_{\text{Me}} - x_{\text{H}})^2 \quad (1.1.5)$$

The difference of electronegativities will be discussed further in Chapter 2. For the moment it will be noted that earlier work by Eley<sup>(5)</sup> took the difference of electronegativity from the dipole moment  $M$  of the Me-H bond. In turn,  $M$  was estimated from measurements of the surface potential. As an alternative approach, Stevenson<sup>(6)</sup> estimated the electronegativity of the metal from the work function, using Pauling's value of 2.1 for the electronegativity  $x_{\text{H}}$ . The results of this approach along the two routes of Eley and of Stevenson are compared with experiment in Table 1.2. This work will be developed in Chapter 2 by appealing to results from band-structure calculations of the various transition-metal series.

TABLE 1.2. Measured and Calculated Heats of Chemisorption  
(units are kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>)

System	$Q_0$ , exp	$Q_0$ , Eley	$Q_0$ , Stevenson
H <sub>2</sub> on Ta	45	34	50
H <sub>2</sub> on W	45	37	46
H <sub>2</sub> on Cr	45	16	24
H <sub>2</sub> on Ni	18.4	19	29
H <sub>2</sub> on Fe	32	19	32