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A global full-dimensional potential energy surface and quasiclassical trajectory study of the O($^1D$)+CH$_4$ multichannel reaction

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Abstract

We report a new global, full-dimensional ground-state potential energy surface (PES) of the O(\(^1\)D) + CH\(_4\) multichannel reaction, based on high-level \textit{ab initio} calculations and fitting procedures. The PES is a permutationally invariant fit to roughly 340 000 electronic energies calculated by MRCI+Q/aug-cc-pVTZ level of theory. Extensive quasiclassical trajectory calculations were carried out on the new PES at the collision energy of relevance to the previously universal crossed molecular beam experiments. The product branching ratios, translational energy distributions and angular distributions of OH+CH\(_3\), H+CH\(_2\)OH/CH\(_3\)O and H\(_2\)+HCO/H\(_2\)CO product channels were calculated and compared with the available experimental results. Very good agreement between theory and experiment has been achieved. The O(\(^1\)D) + CH\(_4\) reaction mainly proceeds through the CH\(_3\)OH intermediate via the trapped abstraction mechanism, starting with the abstraction of the hydrogen atom, rather than the direct insertion pathway with the O(\(^1\)D) atom directly inserting into the C-H bond of CH\(_4\). The process with a very short lifetime behaves like an abstraction reaction, producing a pronounced forward scattering peak as found in the OH+CH\(_3\) channel, while the process with a relatively long lifetime produces reaction products with nearly forward and backward scattering symmetry, similar to an insertion reaction, as found in other reaction channels.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Experimental and theoretical studies on polyatomic reactions have extended and greatly advanced our understanding of chemical reaction dynamics over the last decade[1–14]. Methane is the simplest alkane and the most abundant hydrocarbon in the atmosphere. The reactions of methane with H/F/Cl/O(3P) atoms, which are known as direct abstraction/exchange reactions, have been extensively studied[1–10, 15, 16], for which many interesting dynamical features have been observed. Despite significant progress made in past decades, it is still challenging to elucidate dynamics mechanisms for polyatomic reactions, in particular, involving complex formation, in which a reaction intermediate exists. Such an intermediate is formed due to a potential well along the reaction path, which eventually breaks apart to form the product species. Different from the O(3P) atom, the reactions of O(^1D) with some gas phase molecules, such as NH3, CH4, C2H6 and C3H8, are complex-forming reactions[17–22], with deep wells on the ground-state potential energy surfaces(PESs).

Due to its significance in both the atmospheric and combustion chemistry, the reaction of O(^1D) with methane has attracted great attention both experimentally and theoretically[14, 18, 19, 23–33]. It has been long regarded as a prototype of polyatomic insertion reaction, in which the O(^1D) atom can is thought to directly insert into the C-H bond of methane. Extensive experimental and theoretical studies have been carried out to unravel the dynamics of this typical multichannel polyatomic complex-forming reaction, posing challenges for theory and experiments owing to the ruggedness and high dimensionality of this potential.

In 2000, Yang and co-workers investigated the O(^1D) + CH4 reaction using the universal crossed molecular beam technique[18], indicating OH+CH3 is the main reaction channel, with its branching percentage of roughly 77%, whereas H and H2 elimination channels are minor processes. Product translational energy and angular distributions were determined for the observed reaction channels, indicating the products of the H atom formation channel are slightly backward scattered, and those of the H2 formation channel show an isotropic angular distribution. The angular distribution of the OH product shows both forward and backward peaks, with the forward scattering peak remarkably higher than the backward peak. This is probably not consistent with the direct insertion reaction picture, which is more likely to exhibit forward backward scattering symmetry[34, 35].
Recent experimental studies were focused on the OH/OD product channel for the O(\(^1\)D) + CH\(_4\)/CD\(_4\) reaction, but not for the H or H\(_2\) product channels. Specifically, Suzuki and co-workers carried out crossed molecular beam ion imaging experiment on the O(\(^1\)D) + CD\(_4\)/CH\(_4\) → OD/OH + CD\(_3\)/CH\(_3\) reaction[24–26]. Two distinctive reaction mechanisms were observed, in which the supposed ”insertion” reaction on the ground-state PES exhibits a strongly forward scattering angular distribution, whereas the abstraction channel shows a clear backward scattering angular distribution with discrete structures and occurs most likely on the excited-state PES, as suggested by Hernando et al[30]. More recently, a time-sliced velocity map imaging crossed beams experiment on the O(\(^1\)D) + CD\(_4\) → OD + CD\(_3\) reaction was performed by Yang and co-workers, showing that the abstraction pathway is a minor process[27, 28], consistent with Suzuki’s recent experimental results[25].

Theoretically, the stationary points on the ground-state PES of the O(\(^1\)D) + CH\(_4\) reaction were characterized, and a direct-dynamics study of this reaction was performed by Yu and Muckerman[32]. However, due to the large computational effort this approach entails, a low-level electronic structure method was used and limited trajectories were propagated for a short time. A clear dynamical picture for the ground-state reaction was not obtained.

In light of the vast and valuable information accumulated for the O(\(^1\)D) reaction with CH\(_4\) and its isotopes, a comprehensive theoretical investigation based on first principles, which can provide direct comparison with the experimental results and would subsequently shed light on this intriguing and yet not fully comprehended reaction mechanism is highly desirable. Very recently, we reported a joint experimental and theoretical study on the O(\(^1\)D) + CHD\(_3\) → OH + CD\(_3\) reaction[14]. Unprecedented details have been unraveled for the dynamics of this reaction with comprehensive quasiclassical trajectory (QCT) calculations, based on an accurate, full-dimensional \textit{ab initio} PES, which were able to produce dynamics results in good agreement with the time-sliced velocity map imaging experiment at the collision energy (E\(_c\)) of 6.8 kcal/mol. Furthermore, we found that this reaction proceeds with the initial abstraction of H atom by O(\(^1\)D) from CHD\(_3\), rather than the direct insertion of O(\(^1\)D) atom into the C-H bond of CHD\(_3\), forming an extremely short-lived or long-lived CD\(_3\)OH complex before its decomposition. This mechanism is similar with the process first observed in the triatomic reaction O(\(^1\)D)+HCl/HF → OH+Cl/F[36, 37], in which the O(\(^1\)D) atom initially attaches to the H atom, instead of inserting into the Cl-H bond, although a genuine insertion does occur at low impact parameters. We termed this reaction mechanism
"trapped abstraction", for which the formation of extremely short-lived intermediate is responsible to the predominantly forward scattering angular distribution of CD$_3$ relative to the incoming CHD$_3$[14].

In this article, we present the details of the ground-state PES of the O($^1$D)+CH$_4$ multi-channel reaction, and QCT calculations on this PES. In addition to the OH+CH$_3$ formation channel, the dynamical details of H+CH$_3$O/CH$_2$OH and H$_2$+HCOH/H$_2$CO were also investigated, and compared with the results of the universal crossed molecular beam experiment performed by Yang and co-workers in 2000[18].

The paper is organized as follows. In Sec. II, we present the construction details and properties of the PES, together with QCT calculations. Section III gives the dynamics features obtained by the QCT calculations on the new PES. A summary of the current results and conclusions are given in Sec. IV.

II. POTENTIAL ENERGY SURFACE AND QUASICLASSICAL TRAJECTORY CALCULATIONS

O($^1$D) has a five-fold degenerate electronic state, and its interactions with methane creates one ground-state and four excited-state potential energy surfaces. Note that the first excited state is also correlated with OH + CH$_3$, however, it is ignored in the current theory due to its small contributions to the overall reactivity at low collision energies[14, 27]. We constructed a new ground-state PES of the O($^1$D) + CH$_4$ reaction based on high-level ab initio and fitting methods. Specifically, a total of roughly 340 000 ab initio points were calculated and included in the permutationally invariant polynomial fitting procedure[38, 39]. These electronic structure calculations were done by the multiconfiguration reference internally contracted configuration interaction with Davidson correction (MRCI+Q) method using the MOLPRO suite of codes[40]. The orbitals for the MRCI+Q calculations were taken from six-state complete-active-space self-consistent field (CASSCF) calculations using the dynamical weighting (DW) for each state. The DW-CASSCF calculations with a sech$^2$ weighting function($\beta^{-1}=3$ eV) have been performed[41]. As we constructed the PES with the total energy up to 70 kcal/mol above the O($^1$D)+CH$_4$ asymptote, including the sixth state is useful in optimizing the orbitals in the high energy regions. The active space used in both the CASSCF and MRCI+Q calculations was 18 electrons in 10 orbitals. The calculations
with full-valence space with 14 electrons in 12 orbitals are ideal, but they are extremely expensive to develop a global PES for the title reaction when 340 000 energy points were computed. Lots of tests were performed by us using different active spaces, and the current active space was chosen because this wave function can smoothly connect the large regions of the PES of interest.

The energy points used in the fitting were selected properly based on direct dynamics simulations and further QCT calculations using the preliminary PESs. The initial data set consists of roughly 40,000 electronic energies with the configurations taken from direct dynamics calculations using the unrestricted B3LYP/6-31+g* level of theory. For these calculations, a total of about 400 trajectories were run from the reagents O(1D)+CH₄ at the collision energies of 6.8 kcal/mol and 10.0 kcal/mol, respectively. Additional roughly 400 trajectories were run initiated from the various transition state (TS) regions leading to different product channels. Starting from the first PES based on the initial ~ 40,000 MRCI+Q/aug-cc-pVTZ energies, more data points were added iteratively by doing QCT calculations on those preliminary PESs. Further nuclear configurations for the database in the complex regions were obtained by random displacement of Cartesian coordinates about stationary points. In addition, more data points around the reaction pathways leading to different product channels were computed and added to the data set.

The fit used a basis of permutationally invariant polynomials of Morse-like variables in all internuclear distances \( y_{ij} = \exp(-r_{ij}/\lambda); \) where \( \lambda = 2.0 \) bohrs]. Then the PES is represented in terms of all 15 such variables, by\cite{38, 39}

\[
V = \sum_{m=0}^{M} C_{n_1 n_2 \ldots n_{14} n_{15}} S(y_{12}^{n_1} y_{13}^{n_2} y_{14}^{n_3} \ldots y_{46}^{n_{14}} y_{56}^{n_{15}}),
\]

where \( S \) is a ”symmetrization” operator, and where \( C_{n_1 n_2 \ldots n_{14} n_{15}} \) are the unknown linear coefficients, which are determined by standard linear least-squares fitting to all the data. In this fit, the total order of polynomials involved in the expression \((M = n_1 + n_2 + n_3 + \cdots n_{14} + n_{15})\) does not exceed eight (a total of 9355 terms). The RMS error of the fitted surface is 1.0 kcal/mol for energies up to 230 kcal/mol relative to the global minimum (methanol) of the PES. The final PES is well converged with respect to the fitting errors and dynamics features. The PES is available from the corresponding authors upon request.

Figure 1 shows a complete schematic of the ground-state PES, including the stationary-
point structures and energies relative to the reagents O(\(^{1}\)D)+CH\(_{4}\) (with vibrational zero-point energies not included). As seen, there are several saddle points and product channels, together with one global minimum on the PES. Due to the complexity of the PES for this system, the fitting is challenging to describe accurately all of the stationary points and reaction channels. The corresponding relative energies to the reagent, vibrational zero-point energies (ZPEs) and harmonic frequencies of stationary points obtained on the PES are shown in Table I. The comparisons made for the energies obtained from the current PES and MRCI+Q/AVTZ calculations show very good agreement among them, as shown in Fig. 1 and Table I. The harmonic frequencies from theory are also compared with available experimental results[42].

The reaction paths for various product channels, which were determined by the Quadratic Steepest Descent method[43] on the PES, were displayed in Fig. 2, together with those results calculated by MRCI+Q/AVTZ level of theory. We see very smooth reaction path curves from the PES for different channels. Furthermore, excellent agreement for energies on the reaction paths is achieved between the PES and MRCI+Q/AVTZ values. The maximum fitting error for energy points on the reaction paths is only 0.4 kcal/mol.

A comparison is also made for the theoretical energetics of products (ZPEs included) and available experimental values[44] relative to O(\(^{1}\)D) + CH\(_{4}\) in Table II. The agreement between theory and experiment is satisfactory, with the largest deviation of 3.8 kcal/mol for the H\(_{2}\)+H\(_{2}\)CO channel, which is located roughly 115 kcal/mol below the reagent.

The CH\(_{3}\)OH intermediate is located at 132.3 kcal/mol (ZPE included) below the O(\(^{1}\)D) + CH\(_{4}\) asymptote, resulting in a very deep well along the reaction path. The O(\(^{1}\)D)+CH\(_{4}\) reaction can, in principle, evolve via this deep well on the PES and subsequently decompose to various products. There are seven possible reaction pathways on the PES, starting at the CH\(_{3}\)OH intermediate, with the formation of OH+CH\(_{3}\) and two H elimination channels H+CH\(_{3}\)OH/CH\(_{2}\)OH without a barrier, three H\(_{2}\) elimination channels H\(_{2}\)+H\(_{2}\)CO/trans-HCOH/cis-HCOH via TS1, trans-TS2, cis-TS2, respectively, and the formation of H\(_{2}\)O+CH\(_{2}\) via TS3.

Standard QCT calculations[45, 46] for the title reaction were carried out at the collision energy (E\(_{c}\)) of 6.8 kcal/mol (the collision energy of the crossed molecular beam experiment) on the newly constructed PES with CH\(_{4}\) initially in the ground rovibrational state. Initial coordinates and momenta of CH\(_{4}\) were obtained by randomly sampling the normal coordi-
nates and momenta. Adjustments were then made to the momenta to enforce zero angular momentum of CH$_4$. The initial distance of the O(1D) atom from the center of mass of CH$_4$ was $\sqrt{x^2 + b^2}$, where $b$ is the impact parameter and $x$ was set to 11.0 bohrs. The maximum impact parameter ($b_{max}$) was set to 7.5 bohrs. The orientation of CH$_4$ was randomly sampled and $b$ was selected randomly from the distribution $b_{max}\sqrt{r}$, where $r$ is a random number uniformly distributed from 0 to 1. Roughly 8,000,000 trajectories were run using the velocity-Verlet integration algorithm with a time step of 0.073 fs for a maximum time of 100 ps. The trajectories were terminated when the distance of two fragments became larger than 12 bohrs. Almost all trajectories conserved energy to within 0.05 kcal/mol, confirming the smoothness and accuracy of the PES. We found the trajectories ended up going into various product channels or returning to the reactants using the maximum propagation time we set. The ZPE constraint results[12, 13, 47], obtained from those trajectories in which each product has at least the corresponding ZPE are given.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

One of the most useful pieces of information desirable on the dynamics of a multichannel reaction is the branching ration of the various channels. By analyzing all the trajectories, we get the relative branching percentages at $E_c$=6.8 kcal/mol of the seven product channels as follows.

$$O(^1D) + CH_4 \rightarrow OH + CH_3 \quad (80.1\%)$$
$$\rightarrow H + CH_2OH \quad (9.7\%)$$
$$\rightarrow H + CH_3O \quad (1.9\%)$$
$$\rightarrow H_2 + H_2CO \quad (1.2\%)$$
$$\rightarrow H_2 + trans-HCOH \quad (1.4\%)$$
$$\rightarrow H_2 + cis-HCOH \quad (0.8\%)$$
$$\rightarrow H_2O + CH_2 \quad (4.9\%)$$

We note that the H$_2$O channel can not be detected in the universal crossed molecular beam experiment due to the low resolution at that time[18], although its theoretical yield accounts for 4.9%. In addition, various product isomers can not be identified by experiment. The primary product branching ratios obtained by theory and experiment[18] are shown in
Table III. In Table III the H₂O channel is not included in the accounting of the percentages to be consistent with experiment. The branching percentages of OH, H and H₂ channels obtained by theory are 84.2%, 12.2% and 3.6%, in good agreement with the experimental results of 77%, 18% and 5%, respectively, indicating OH+CH₃ is the dominant reaction pathway.

A. The OH+CH₃ channel

This channel accounts for roughly 80% of the total product yield in the O(¹D)+CH₄ multichannel reaction, obtained both from theory and experiment. The center of mass (CM) translational energy distribution of OH+CH₃, and angular distribution of CH₃ obtained by the QCT calculations on the newly constructed PES are displayed in Fig. 3(a) and Fig. 3(b), respectively. The behavior of the translational energy distribution, P(Eₜ), supports that the pathway leading to CH₃+OH on the ground-state PES is barrierless, with the P(Eₜ) that peaks at around 7 kcal/mol with a long tail up to the energy of about 44.0 kcal/mol. The averaged translational energy release for this channel is about 11.0 kcal/mol, corresponding to a small fraction (0.25) of the total available energy (~ 44 kcal/mol), and this agrees well with the experimental measurement [18] of 12.0 kcal/mol, indicating that most of the available energy in this channel is deposited into the internal degrees of freedom of the molecular radical products.

The resulting rovibrational state distributions of OH are shown in Fig. 4. We can see considerable vibrational excitations of OH, with the vibrational populations up to v=4. As shown in Fig. 4(b), the peak of the rotational distributions of OH in different vibrational states gradually changes from N=15 for v=0 to N=8 for v=4. We have also calculated mode-specific CH₃(n₁n₂n₃n₄) vibrational distributions to further investigate the CH₃+OH product channel. The corresponding frequencies for each mode of CH₃ are given in Table I. The normal-mode analysis of CH₃ based on the total vibrational energy of the vibrational states were done using the same approach as described in elsewhere [48, 49]. Figure 5(a) shows the mode-specific vibrational distributions of CH₃, indicating CH₃ vibrational state is highly excited, especially for the umbrella bending (ω₁) and scissor bending (ω₂) modes. All the vibrational states shown here correspond to about 34.2% of the total CH₃ vibrational populations, implying many higher excited states are open as well, though their respective
population is relatively small. The largest population is on the ground state, but it only accounts for about 6% of the total populations, compared to 4% and 4.5% respectively, for the states (1000) and (0100). A rather broad distribution is shown for the umbrella bending overtone, with considerable populations for the quantum number up to 6. The excitation of the symmetric stretching $\omega_3$ and asymmetric stretching $\omega_4$ is also seen, with the CH$_3(\omega_3=1)$ and CH$_3(\omega_4=1)$ populations roughly 2 times smaller than the ground state of CH$_3$. A broad distribution for the rotational states of CH$_3$ is seen in Fig. 5(b), with its peak at roughly $j=7$ and its distribution up to $j=40$.

The angular distribution of the OH product in Fig. 3 (b) shows a predominant forward scattering peak relative to the O(\textsuperscript{1}D) beam direction, with a small backward scattering peak and relatively small signals from the sideways scattering. The behavior of this distribution is very similar to that of the recent calculations for the O(\textsuperscript{1}D)+CHD$_3$ $\rightarrow$ OH+CD$_3$ reaction\cite{14}, which closely resembles the experimental results of O(\textsuperscript{1}D)+CH$_4$ $\rightarrow$ OH+CH$_3$ by Yang and co-workers in 2000\cite{18} with a pronounced forward peak and a relatively small backward one, despite the fact that the direct abstraction reaction proceeding on the excited-state PES, which can also produce backward scattering peak, is ignored in the current theory due to its small contributions to the overall reactivity. A 3D polar plot for the product translational energy and angular distributions for the OH+CH$_3$ channel is shown in Fig. 6. It is distinct that the predominant forward scattering peak mainly resides in the low kinetic energy region, indicating the high internal excitation of the products.

As has been speculated in early experiment\cite{18}, this dynamical picture is not consistent with the direct insertion mechanism as has long been thought, which is more likely to lead to the forward and backward scattering symmetry. The origin of the predominantly forward scattering as well as the backward and sideways scattering is unknown, until recently the true reaction mechanism for the reaction of O(\textsuperscript{1}D) with isotopically substituted CHD$_3$ is elucidated by us, which we termed "trapped abstraction". By further investigating into the current QCT results, we found O(\textsuperscript{1}D)+CH$_4$ $\rightarrow$ OH+CH$_3$ also mainly proceeds via the trapped abstraction mechanism, rather than the direct insertion mechanism. Specifically, the reaction initially takes place through the O(\textsuperscript{1}D) abstraction of H atom out of CH$_3$, instead of inserting into the C-H bond. The consequently formed CH$_3$OH complex is easy to dissociate because the energy released from complex formation is highly localized in relative motion of OH and CH$_3$. As a result, more than half population of complex have short life time with
OH and CH$_3$ vibrating relatively only once, producing a pronounced forward scattering peak by stripping mechanism with initial large impact parameters and a backward scattering peak by rebounding mechanism with small impact parameters as observed for this reaction and its isotopes.

B. The H formation channel

As shown in Table III, the H formation channel accounts for more than 10% of the total product yield and can be considered as a second important channel. There are two H formation processes on the ground-state PES of the title reaction, i.e., H+CH$_2$OH and H+CH$_3$O, as shown in Fig. 1. As has been obtained from the QCT calculations, the relative branching percentage of H+CH$_2$OH is roughly 4 times larger than that of H+CH$_3$O, indicating H+CH$_2$OH is the dominant product for the H formation channel. However, the two H formation processes were not exactly identified by early experiment, and the results attribute to the sum of two contributions[18]. It is interesting that no large differences have been seen between these two H formation processes in the QCT calculations, for the resulting translational energy and angular distributions. Hence, we show the total translational energy and angular distributions of the sum of contributions from the two H formation processes in Fig. 7. The P(E$_T$) peaks at about 6 kcal/mol and has an average amount of energy in translation of 9.5 kcal/mol, corresponding to a fraction of 26% as computed for the H+CH$_2$OH channel (the total available energy is roughly 36 kcal/mol for H+CH$_2$OH and 27 kcal/mol for H+CH$_3$O ). This small fraction of energy in translation indicates most of the available energy is channeled into the internal excitations of CH$_2$OH. The overall behavior of the translational energy distribution is quite similar to that of the experimental results[18], which supports that the dynamics of this channel is barrierless.

As shown in Fig. 7(b), the angular distribution of the H formation channel behaves nearly symmetric with respect to the forward and backward directions, as expected for a long-time complex formation reaction. A 3D polar plot for the product translational energy and angular distributions for the H formation channel is shown in Fig. 8, indicating the forward and backward scattering signals are slightly stronger than those of the sideways s-cattering. From the experimental angular distribution, the radical product (CH$_2$OH/CH$_3$O) from the H formation channel is noticeably backward scattered with regard to the O($^1$D)
beam direction. However, in the experimental 3D polar plot, the product only looks slightly backward scattered, which resembles that of the theoretical results showing almost forward and backward scattering symmetry. Detailed analysis of the trajectories shows that the two H formation processes mainly proceed through the CH$_3$OH intermediate, starting with the abstraction of the hydrogen atom, similar to the initial step in producing OH+CH$_3$. Only a very small portion ($< 1\%$) of trajectories goes through the typical direct insertion pathway, with the O(1D) atom directly inserting into the C-H bond of CH$_3$. However, different from the OH+CH$_3$ formation process, only the CH$_3$OH intermediate with a long lifetime produces H+CH$_2$OH/CH$_3$O, thus resulting in the forward and backward scattering symmetry, similar to an insertion reaction.

C. The H$_2$ formation channel

Another reaction channel the experiment observed is the H$_2$ formation, which accounts for 5% and 3.6% of the total reaction yield obtained from theory and experiment, respectively. As shown in Fig. 1, there are three H$_2$ formation pathways on the ground-state PES via the CH$_3$OH intermediate, which further decomposes to H$_2$+cis-HCOH, H$_2$+trans-HCOH and H$_2$+H$_2$CO, respectively. The cis-HCOH and trans-HCOH channels are produced via the similar barrier heights (differing by $\sim$ 1 kcal/mol) starting from CH$_3$OH, with the reaction exothermicity differing by $\sim$ 5 kcal/mol, while the H$_2$CO channel is formed through a higher barrier and with much more exothermicity. The relative branching ratio of H$_2$+HCOH (the sum of cis-HCOH and trans-HCOH) versus H$_2$+H$_2$CO is 65% : 35% obtained from the current theory, whereas the three isomers were not exactly identified by experiment[18]. Since the H$_2$+H$_2$CO channel has a much higher reverse barrier than the HCOH process, the former channel should be less favorable, which is verified by the current QCT results.

Figure 9 (a) displays the total translational energy distribution of the H$_2$ formation channel, together with the translational energy distributions of H$_2$+HCOH and H$_2$+H$_2$CO pathways, respectively. It is interesting that the total translational energy distribution demonstrates obviously the bimodal structure, with one peak at around 22 kcal/mol and one at roughly 60 kcal/mol, in accord with the experimental results[18]. Since H$_2$+HCOH and H$_2$+H$_2$CO formation processes are energetically significantly different from each other, it was presumed by experiment that the higher translational energy peak has to result from
the H$_2$+H$_2$CO channel and the lower peak in the product translational energy distribution probably comes from the H$_2$+HCOH channel, which has a much lower reverse reaction barrier. This is verified by the present QCT calculations on the new PES, which can also obtain each P(E$_T$) curve for H$_2$+HCOH and H$_2$+H$_2$CO. As shown, the translational energy distribution of H$_2$+HCOH peaks at around 22 kcal/mol, and vanishes at the available energy of about 58 kcal/mol. The P(E$_T$) distribution of H$_2$+H$_2$CO behaves differently, with a peak at around 60 kcal/mol, reaching up to the total available energy of about 110 kcal/mol. The overall behavior of the translational energy distributions of H$_2$+HCOH and H$_2$+H$_2$CO supports that the dynamics of the two channels is dominated by the exit channel barrier, which is quite different from that of H+CH$_2$OH/CH$_3$O or OH+CH$_3$.

The isotropic angular distribution of the H$_2$ formation channel shown in Fig. 9(b) agrees well the experimental results[18], with the forward scattering signal slightly stronger than the backward scattering. The 3D polar plot for the translational energy distribution and angular distribution of the H$_2$ formation channel is much more complicated, as we see from Fig. 10. The H$_2$CO product should be clearly faster than HCOH due to the remarkably different exothermicity and translational energy distributions, thus the outer-sphere distribution with larger velocity arises from the H$_2$CO channel, whereas the inner-sphere distribution with smaller velocity results from the HCOH channel. Both the two H formation channels yield products with isotropic angular distributions. By investigating the trajectories for the two channels, we find a long-lived intermediate CH$_3$OH is formed before its decomposition into H$_2$+HCOH/H$_2$CO, similar to the H formation channel. Furthermore, the complex is nearly exclusively formed by the abstraction of H atom from CH$_4$ by O(^1D), followed by sliding into the deep CH$_3$OH well , but not by the direction insertion of O(^1D) into the C-H bond of CH$_4$.

To investigate the lifetime differences among the OH formation, H formation and H$_2$ formation channels, we calculated the distributions of times for these reaction channels, defined as the duration time for a reactive trajectory proceeding from the reactant side to product side with a distance between two fragments of 6 bohrs. As shown in Fig. 11, the reaction time distribution for OH+CH$_3$ is quite similar to OH+CD$_3$ as we discussed for the O(^1D)+CHD$_3$ → OH+CD$_3$ reaction[14], which is noticeably peaked at around 150 fs, with a long but small tail up to several picoseconds. The predominantly forward scattering for this channel arises from the very short reaction time. In contrast, the products for H and
H$_2$ formation channels are dominantly contributed from the CH$_3$OH intermediate with long lifetime ($\approx$ 500 fs), although a small portion of products also comes from trajectories with relatively short reaction time. As a result, the H and H$_2$ formation channels result in nearly forward and backward scattering symmetry and isotropic angular distribution.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, a new ab initio global PES of the O($^1$D)+CH$_4$ multichannel reaction is calculated in this study. The PES is constructed by fitting roughly 340,000 MRCI+Q/aug-cc-pVTZ calculations of electronic energies, using permutationally invariant polynomials. Extensive QCT calculations have been performed on the fitted PES, and detailed dynamics information of the OH+CH$_3$, H+CH$_2$OH/CH$_2$O and H$_2$+HCO/H$_2$CO product channels are presented and compared with the available experimental results. Good agreement between the QCT calculations and experiment has been achieved for the product branching ratios, translational energy distributions and angular distributions. The product branching percentages of OH, H and H$_2$ channels obtained by theory are 84.2%, 12.2% and 3.6%, in good agreement with the experimental results of 77%, 18% and 5%, respectively, indicating OH+CH$_3$ is the dominant reaction pathway. The angular distribution of OH displays a predominantly forward scattering peak, with a small backward scattering peak, while the products of the H atom formation channel show nearly forward scattering and backward scattering symmetry, and the products of the H$_2$ formation process show an isotropic angular distribution.

Further investigations of the trajectories shows the O($^1$D)+CH$_4$ reaction mainly proceeds through the CH$_3$OH intermediate via the trapped abstraction mechanism[14], starting with the abstraction of the H atom from CH$_4$ by O($^1$D), with only a very small portion of trajectories going through the typical direct insertion pathway with the O($^1$D) atom directly inserting into the C-H bond of CH$_4$. The trajectories with short lifetimes behave as an abstraction reaction, mainly producing backward-scattered product with initial small impact parameters and forward-scattered product with large impact parameters, as has been found in most reactive trajectories of the OH+CH$_3$ channel and thus resulting in the dominantly forward scattering of this channel.

A significant portion of trajectories are trapped in the CH$_3$OH well for a long period of
time, although they also start with the abstraction of the H atom. These kinds of trajectories manifest as those for an insertion barrierless reaction, producing products with forward and backward symmetry, as found in all the reactive trajectories of the H+CH₂OH/CH₃O channel and some reactive trajectories of the OH+CH₃ channel. The reaction mechanism of the H₂ formation channel is similar to the H formation channel, except that the dynamics of H₂+HCOH/H₂CO is dominated by the exit channel barrier.

We anticipate that this reaction mechanism should also be responsible for the reaction of O(¹D) with ethane and propane, as well as many other chemical reactions with deep wells in the interaction region. This study provides an excellent example of multiple dynamical pathways in a single chemical reaction, which opens enormous opportunities in theoretically investigating the dynamics of complicated chemical reactions which are important in combustion chemistry.

Acknowledgments

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[40] H. J. Werner et al., MOLPRO, version 2010.1, a package of ab initio programs, see details in http://www.molpro.net/, 2010.


Caption of Figures:

Fig. 1 Schematic of the ground-state PES of the O(1D)+CH₄ multichannel reaction. The reaction energetics of the OH+CH₃, the H formation, the H₂ formation and CH₂+H₂O channels are indicated by blue, green, purple, and red lines, respectively. The fitted energies are in kcal/mol, relative to the reactants O(1D) + CH₄, and those shown in parentheses are from MRCI+Q/aug-cc-pVTZ calculations. All of the energies are shown without vibrational zero-point energy correction.

Fig. 2 Minimum energy reaction paths of the O(1D)+CH₄ multichannel reaction obtained from the PES (solid lines) and those calculated from MRCI+Q/aVTZ theory (symbols).

Fig. 3 (a) Center-of-mass (CM) translational energy distribution of OH + CH₃ obtained from the QCT calculations. The total available energy is indicated by black arrow. (b) Angular distribution of OH relative to the direction of the incoming O(1D).

Fig. 4 (a) Vibrational state distribution of OH for the OH + CH₃ channel. (b) Rovibrational state distributions of OH up to v=4.

Fig. 5 (a) Mode-specific vibrational state distribution of CH₃ for the OH + CH₃ channel. (b) Rotational state distribution of CH₃.

Fig. 6 3D polar plot for the product translational energy and angular distributions for the OH+CH₃ channel. The forward direction (0°) corresponds to the direction of the O(1D) reagent.

Fig. 7 (a) Total translational energy distribution of the H formation channel (sum of contributions of H+CH₂OH and H+CH₃O). The total available energies for each channel are indicated by black arrows. (b) Angular distribution of CH₂OH/CH₃O relative to the direction of the incoming O(1D).

Fig. 8 Same as Fig. 6 except for the H formation channel.

Fig. 9 (a) Total translational energy distribution of the H₂ formation channel, together with the translational energy distributions of H₂+HCOH and H₂+H₂CO pathways, respec-
tively. The total available energies for each channel are indicated by black arrows. (b) Angular distribution of HCOH/H$_2$CO relative to the direction of the incoming O($^1$D).

Fig. 10 Same as Fig. 6 except for the H$_2$ formation channel.

Fig. 11 The distributions of reaction time (fs) for trajectories of OH, H and H$_2$ formation channels.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Energy$^a$</th>
<th>ZPE</th>
<th>Frequencies$^b$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O$(^1D) + \text{CH}_4$</td>
<td>0.00(0.00)</td>
<td>28.87</td>
<td>1365(t), 1584(e), 3130, 3196(t)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ 1306(t), 1534(e), 2917, 3016(t) ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH + CH$_3$</td>
<td>−39.68(−39.42)</td>
<td>24.68</td>
<td>3804; 514, 1467(e), 3109, 3346(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ 3738; 603, 1403(e), 3004, 3171(e) ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H + CH$_2$OH</td>
<td>−31.50(−31.47)</td>
<td>23.69</td>
<td>405, 474, 1074, 1260, 1436, 1532, 3211, 3313, 3910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ 420, 482, 1048, 1183, 1334, 1459, 3043, 3162, 3674 ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H + CH$_3$O</td>
<td>−23.23(−23.67)</td>
<td>22.85</td>
<td>826(e), 1040, 1392, 1479(e), 2948, 2985(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ 652(e), 1044, 1376, 1412(e), 2840, 2955(e) ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H$_2$ + H$_2$CO</td>
<td>−106.00(−106.02)</td>
<td>23.41</td>
<td>4515; 1159, 1313, 1574, 1782, 2959(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ 4401; 1167, 1249, 1500, 1746, 2783(e) ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H$_2$ + cis-HCOH</td>
<td>−48.57(−48.35)</td>
<td>23.18</td>
<td>4341; 1184, 1319, 1386, 1606, 2690, 3692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H$_2$ + trans-HCOH</td>
<td>−53.66(−53.22)</td>
<td>23.94</td>
<td>4294; 1193, 1273, 1360, 1691, 2835, 3890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H$_2$O + CH$_2$</td>
<td>−37.37(−37.33)</td>
<td>24.54</td>
<td>1409, 2877, 2972; 1720, 3940, 3964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS1</td>
<td>−37.66(−37.77)</td>
<td>28.24</td>
<td>2138i, 869, 1128, 1158, 1309, 1394, 1530, 1680, 1884, 2872, 2913, 3020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cis-TS2</td>
<td>−39.18(−38.87)</td>
<td>26.58</td>
<td>921i, 646, 722, 1056, 1155, 1268, 1357, 1501, 1680, 2839, 2856, 3512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trans-TS2</td>
<td>−42.27(−41.95)</td>
<td>26.56</td>
<td>985i, 546, 704, 922, 1149, 1214, 1438, 1521, 1614, 2635, 3034, 3803</td>
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<tr>
<td>TS3</td>
<td>−47.14(−46.64)</td>
<td>28.66</td>
<td>847i, 434, 539, 832, 1119, 1302, 1422, 1620, 2730, 2996, 3083, 3971</td>
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<tr>
<td>vdw</td>
<td>−49.78(−49.69)</td>
<td>30.24</td>
<td>261, 365, 485, 627, 1165, 1300, 1459, 1841, 2861, 2883, 3782, 4083</td>
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<tr>
<td>CH$_3$OH</td>
<td>−135.88(−135.99)</td>
<td>32.03</td>
<td>238, 1015, 1047, 1181, 1454, 1460, 1485, 1525, 2998, 3079, 3124, 3796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ 200, 1033, 1060, 1165, 1345, 1455, 1477, 1477, 2844, 2960, 3000, 3681 ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$ The fitted energies are relative to O$(^1D) + \text{CH}_4$. The values in the parentheses are from MRCI+Q/aug-cc-pVTZ calculations relative to O$(^1D) + \text{CH}_4$. $^b$ The available experimental values[42] are shown in the brackets.
TABLE II: Comparison between theoretical\(^a\) and experimental (0 K) energetics for the \(O^{(1)D} + CH_4\) reaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Experiment (Ref. [44])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(O^{(1)D} + CH_4)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH + CH(_3)</td>
<td>-43.8</td>
<td>-43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H + CH(_2)OH</td>
<td>-36.7</td>
<td>-39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H + CH(_3)O</td>
<td>-29.3</td>
<td>-30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H(_2) + H(_2)CO</td>
<td>-111.5</td>
<td>-115.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H(_2) + trans-HCOH</td>
<td>-58.6</td>
<td>-61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H(_2)O + CH(_2)</td>
<td>-41.7</td>
<td>-42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH(_3)OH</td>
<td>-132.72</td>
<td>-133.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Energies in kcal/mol include the zero-point energy.

TABLE III: Comparison between theoretical and experimental branching ratios of product channels at \(E_c=6.8\) kcal/mol for the \(O^{(1)D} + CH_4\) reaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Channel</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Experiment (Ref. [18])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OH+CH(_3)</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H+CH(_2)OH/CH(_3)O</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H(_2)+HCOH/H(_2)CO</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reaction Coordinate

Potential Energy (kcal/mol)

-140 -120 -100 -80 -60 -40 -20 0

O(1D)+CH4
H+CH3O
H+CH3
OH+CH3
H+CH2OH
H2 + cis-HCOH
H2 + trans-HCOH
H2 + H2O
H2 + H2CO

Potential Energy (kcal/mol)

-15 -10 -5 0 5 10 15 20

Reaction Coordinate
(a) CH₃ 

Vibrational Population vs. \( E_{\text{vib}} \) (cm⁻¹)

- (0000)
- (0100)
- (1000)
- (1100)
- (0200)
- (2000)
- (1010)
- (2100)
- (3000)
- (2200)
- (4000)
- (3100)
- (5000)
- (4100)
- (6000)

(b) Distribution of \( j_{\text{CH}_3} \)

- Blue line representing the distribution.

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(a) $H^+CH_2OH/CH_3O$

(b) $CH_2OH/CH_3O$

Translational Energy (kcal/mol)

$P(E_T)$

CM Scattering Angle, $\theta$ (degree)

$T(\theta)$

$E_{tot}$
(a) Graph showing the probability distribution $P(E_T)$ of translational energy $(kcal/mol)$.

- Red line: $H_2$ formation
- Orange dashed line: $H_2 + HCOH$
- Cyan dashed line: $H_2 + H_2CO$

The energy $E_{tot}$ is indicated on the graph.

(b) Graph showing the transmission coefficient $T(\theta)$ as a function of the CM scattering angle $\theta$ (degree).

- Blue line: $HCOH/H_2CO$

The graph illustrates the scattering behavior of different reaction pathways.