

Theoretical Investigation of the Inversion of the Methylcyclopropyl Radical[†]

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Abstract: The dynamics of the inversion of the methylcyclopropyl radical is analyzed theoretically. Ab initio UHF calculations are carried out for a fully optimized geometry, and the vibrational force field is calculated at stationary points of the potential. The inversion is shown to involve not only the out-of-plane methyl vibration but also the methyl rotation, both subject to potential energy barriers. The inversion rate constant is calculated for temperatures ≥ 90 K where averaging over the methyl rotation is permitted. An analytical inversion potential, based on the calculated force field but adjusted empirically, is shown to account satisfactorily for the observed rate constants in the range $94 \text{ K} \leq T \leq 160 \text{ K}$. Heavy-atom tunneling contributes substantially to the calculated inversion rate. At very low temperatures methyl torsion is predicted to slow down the inversion and to give rise to a significant deuterium effect.

1. Introduction

In a recent paper,¹ it was shown that the inversion of oxiranyl proceeds by tunneling: The rate of inversion, measured by ESR spectroscopy, exhibits a large primary kinetic isotope effect, and its temperature dependence shows a characteristic "curved" Arrhenius plot. This interpretation is supported by detailed quantum-chemical and dynamical calculations, which indicate that the observed rate parameters are in good agreement with theoretical results. The oxiranyl radical rather than the simpler cyclopropyl radical was chosen to study the inversion dynamics because the rate of inversion of cyclopropyl is too fast to be accessible by ESR techniques. In methylcyclopropyl, the inversion is slow enough to be monitored by ESR signals, but this reaction follows the usual Arrhenius plot and is not normally associated with tunneling.^{2,3}

In the present paper, we take a closer look at this inversion. Although tunneling is obviously less important for a methyl group than for a proton or deuteron, it may not be prudent to neglect it entirely. A hint that the conventional over-the-barrier picture is not completely satisfactory is provided by the value of the preexponential factor found to be $2 \times 10^{13} \text{ s}^{-1}$, which amounts to a transition frequency of about 330 cm^{-1} . This seems to be slightly high for the out-of-plane vibrational frequency at energies above the barrier. It therefore seems possible that at lower temperatures tunneling transitions well below the top of the barrier make a substantial contribution to the observed inversion rate. Since the ESR data³ indicate fixed positions for methyl protons at 94 K, methyl rotation will be strongly hindered at this temperature. This suggests that the methyl out-of-plane vibration governing the inversion is coupled with methyl rotation.

Earlier ab initio calculations,^{4,5} including full geometry optimization at the UHF/3-21 G level of theory,⁶ indicate equilibrium configurations of C_h symmetry with a methylenic CH bond bisecting the plane of the ring. This would imply that inversion is accompanied by methyl rotation over 60° . However, no force field calculations are available nor has the orientation of the methyl group in the transition state been specified. The calculated pyramidalization angle of 43.4° differs sharply from the experimental estimate of 22.9° .³

For our purpose it will thus be necessary to carry out new calculations of the same type as those reported for oxiranyl.¹ Using an ab initio spin-unrestricted Hartree-Fock (UHF) method, we calculate the vibrational force field in the nonplanar equilibrium configurations and in the planar transition state between them. The resulting structural data will form the basis of an investigation of the dynamics of the inversion.

2. Computational Methods

The ab initio calculations were performed with the GAMESS program⁷ at the UHF/6-31 G** level of theory.⁸ The geometry was fully optim-

Table I. Energies E , Relative Energies ΔE , Zero-Point Energies ϵ_0 , and Inversion Barrier Heights $\Delta\epsilon_0$ for Six Conformations of the Methylcyclopropyl Radical

conformn	E , hartree	ΔE , cm^{-1}	ϵ_0 , cm^{-1}	$\Delta\epsilon_0$, cm^{-1}
C_h/bm	-155.469 32		22439	
C_h/e	-155.461 66	1681	22106	1495
C_h/bs	-155.461 65	1683	22156	1638
C_i/s	-155.461 65	1683	22087	1478
C_1/m	-155.469 29	7	22383	-49
C_h/mb	-155.466 66	584	22321	558

Table II. Structural Parameters for 1-Methylcyclopropyl^a

	C_h/bm	C_h/e	C_h/bs	C_i/s	C_1/m	C_h/mb
C_1-C_2	1.469	1.454	1.456	1.455	1.469	1.467
C_1-C_3	1.469	1.455	1.456	1.454	1.469	1.467
C_1-C_4	1.489	1.483	1.484	1.483	1.490	1.497
C_4-H_5	1.091	1.085	1.090	1.089	1.091	1.087
C_4-H_6	1.085	1.089	1.086	1.087	1.085	1.086
C_4-H_7	1.085	1.089	1.086	1.085	1.085	1.086
C_2-H_8	1.078	1.081	1.081	1.081	1.079	1.078
C_3-H_{10}	1.078	1.081	1.081	1.081	1.079	1.078
C_2-H_9	1.080	1.081	1.081	1.081	1.078	1.080
C_3-H_{11}	1.080	1.081	1.081	1.081	1.078	1.080
$C_2C_1C_3$	62.38	63.63	63.62	63.61	62.33	63.33
$C_4C_1C_2C_3$	39.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	39.56	37.81
methyl rotation	90.00	180.00	90.00	74.13	85.75	270.00

^a Bond lengths are in angstroms; angles are in degrees.

ized, and the stationary points were characterized through the Hessian matrix. Expectation values of S^2 were calculated to check for contamination by higher spin states, which can occur in the UHF formalism. The resulting values were all ≤ 0.77 and thus close enough to the exact value of 0.75 to show that the method is suitable in the case at hand.

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Table III. Calculated Normal-Mode Frequencies (in cm^{-1}) for 1-Methylcyclopropyl in the C_h/bm , C_h/bs , and C_h/mb Configurations

	a' symmetry			a'' symmetry		
	C_h/bm	C_h/bs	C_h/mb	C_h/bm	C_h/bs	C_h/mb
CH ₂ stretch	3346	3309	3343	CH ₂ stretch	3331	3294
CH ₂ stretch	3268	3231	3265	CH ₂ ^{2_{eso}} stretch	3264	3252
CH ₃ stretch	3234	3208	3161	CH ₂ stretch	3262	3226
CH ₃ stretch	3165	3132	3219	CCH bend	1606	1614
ring + CH ₂ deformn	1649	1602	1647	CH ₂ deformn	1589	1594
CH ₃ deformn	1614	1523	1609	CH ₃ deformn + CCC ring	1272	1257
CC _{eso} + C skeleton pyram	1549	1560	1547	CC _{eso} + CH ₃ deformn	1230	1244
CC stretch	1475	1669	1478	CC ring + CH ₂ twist	1200	1208
C skeleton pyram	1261	1117	1239	CC _{eso} + CCC _{endo}	988	1004
CH ₂ wag	1163	1178	1158	CH ₂ scissors	911	919
CCH bend + CCC ring				ring deformn	348	339
+CC ring	1076	1038	1034	CH ₃ rotn	183	90i
CCH bend	1012	1067	1064			188i
CH ₂ twist	816	832	833			
CCC + CC ring	774	703	766			
C skeleton pyram	293	292i	290			

Table IV. Same as Table III but for the C_h/e Configuration

a' symmetry		a'' symmetry	
assignt	C_h/e	assignt	C_h/e
CH stretch	3268	CH ₂ stretch	3319
CH ₂ stretch	3249	CH ₂ stretch	3303
CH ₂ stretch	3242	CH ₂ methyl stretch	3207
CH ₃ stretch	3164	CCH out-of-plane	1605
CC stretch	1668	CH ₂ deformn	1257
CH ₂ -methyl deformn	1613	CCC + CH ₂ deformn	1119
CH ₂ deformn	1592	CH ₂ methyl wag	1059
CC stretch	1559	C skeleton pyram	
CCH in plane + CC stretch	1520	CH ₂ scissors	923
CCH (methyl) + CCC	1243	CH ₂ scissors	829
CCC bend + CH ₂ wag	1211	CH ₃ rotn	94
CH ₂ wag	1182	C skeleton pyram	298i
CC stretch + CH ₂ wag	1038		
CCC bend + CCH (methyl)	1000		
CCC bend	708		
CCC bend	338		

Table V. Summary of the Normal-Mode Frequencies for Pyramidalization and Methyl Rotation (in cm^{-1})

	pyrami- dalization	-CH ₃ rotation		pyrami- dalization	-CH ₃ rotation
C_h/bm	293	183	C_1/s	295i	36
C_h/e	298i	94	C_1/m	283	170
C_h/bs	292i	90i	C_h/mb	290	188i

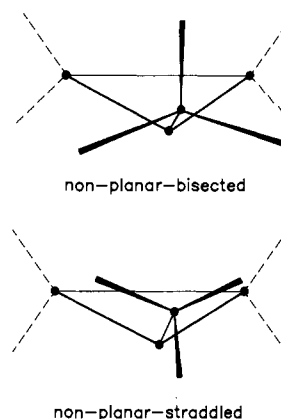
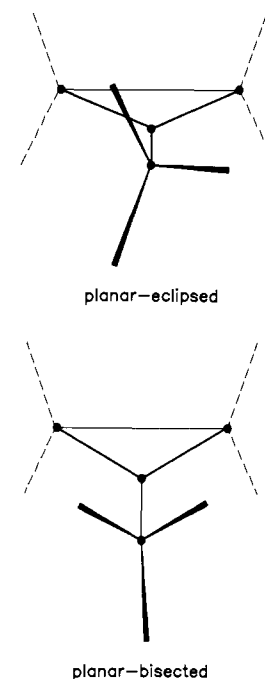
To obtain insight in the overall shape of the potential energy surface, the following conformations were studied:

(i) C_h/bm , a conformation of C_h symmetry with an out-of-plane methyl carbon atom such that a methyl CH bond bisects the plane of the ring (Figure 1, top); (ii) C_h/e , a planar conformation of C_h symmetry with an in-plane methyl carbon atom such that a methyl CH bond eclipses the plane of the ring (Figure 2, top); (iii) C_h/bs , as (ii) except that a methyl CH bond bisects the plane of the ring (Figure 2, bottom); (iv) C_h/mb , as (i) except that the methyl group is rotated over 180° (or 60°), also referred to as the straddled conformation (Figure 1, bottom); (v) C_1/m , an asymmetric conformation with an out-of-plane methyl carbon atom; (vi) C_1/s , as (v) with an in-plane methyl carbon atom.

3. Computational Results

The results of the computations are listed in Tables I–V. In Table I, we collect the energies of conformations (i)–(vi). Table II lists structural parameters of all six conformations and Tables III and IV list normal mode frequencies for four conformations. Finally, in Table V, we list the frequencies associated with the methyl rotation and carbon skeleton pyramidalization (methyl out-of-plane bending) for all six conformations.

These results predict that the conformation C_h/bm will be the global minimum with C_h/e as the transition state between the two equivalent C_h/bm conformations. C_h/bs is a second-order saddle point, the associated Hessian of the electronic energy having two

**Figure 1.** Conformations C_h/bm (top) and C_h/mb (bottom) of 1-methylcyclopropyl. C_h/mb differs from the stable C_h/bm conformation by a methyl rotation over 60°.**Figure 2.** Conformations C_h/e (top) and C_h/bs (bottom) of 1-methylcyclopropyl. C_h/bs differs from the "transition state" C_h/e by a methyl rotation.

negative eigenvalues, viz. for methyl rotation and skeletal pyramidalization. C_h/bs has almost the same energy as C_h/e , which suggests the presence of a first-order saddle point of lower energy to be reached by methyl rotation. We obtained such a confor-

Table VI. Comparison of the Characteristics of the *ab Initio* and Empirical Potentials for the Methyl Inversion in Methylcyclopropyl

	frequency at the bottom, cm ⁻¹	frequency at the top, cm ⁻¹	pyramidalization angle, deg	barrier height, cm ⁻¹
<i>ab initio</i>	293	292 <i>i</i>	39.5	1495
empirical	290	290 <i>i</i>	35.7	1250

mation by relieving the symmetry constraints, rotating the methyl group over 30°, and optimizing the geometry: it turned out to be isoenergetic with C_1/s before correction for zero-point energy differences and lower even than C_h/e after correction. Analogously, a second minimum was located. It therefore appears that there is a region of the potential energy surface where methyl rotation is essentially free, namely near the "planar" transition state. However, methyl rotation between the conformations C_h/bm and C_h/m_b is hindered by a substantial barrier, in agreement with the experimental observation that the methyl proton positions are frozen at low temperatures on the time scale of the ESR experiment.

The calculations lead to a pyramidalization angle of about 40°, in agreement with earlier calculations,⁶ suggesting that the rough experimental estimate of about 23°³ is unreliable.

4. Discussion

These results indicate that methylcyclopropyl inversion is accompanied by methyl rotation. Both the methyl out-of-plane bending mode and the methyl torsional mode involve potential energy barriers. These two barriers are not independent since the rotational barrier vanishes in the transition state of the inversion mode. Because of this and because the available measurements refer to relatively high temperatures, we shall average over the methyl rotation and treat the inversion as a one-dimensional barrier problem.

To derive the effective one-dimensional barrier, we write the two-dimensional barrier in the form

$$U(q_1, \theta) = (Aq^4 - Bq^2 + Zq^3 \sin 3\theta)[1 + \exp(-q^2)] \quad (1)$$

where q is the out-of-plane bending coordinate and θ is the methyl rotation angle. The origin $q = \theta = 0$ is taken to be the transition state with θ halfway between the two minimum values for C_h/bm . The A and B terms determine the usual quartic potential, and the factor in square brackets corrects the curvature at the top of the barrier. The Z term introduces the asymmetry associated with methyl rotation. At temperatures where this rotation is essentially free, eq 1 can be integrated to yield the effective potential.

$$U_{\text{eff}}(q) = (Aq^4 - Bq^2)[1 + \exp(-q^2)] \quad (2)$$

The parameters A and B are chosen so as to reproduce the barrier height and width and, approximately, the curvature at the equilibrium and planar configurations. The corresponding Schrödinger equation yields eigenvalues ϵ_v^\pm forming closely spaced pairs below the barrier. The rate constant for a given vibrational quantum number v can be approximately expressed in terms of the pair spacing:⁹

$$k_v = 2|\epsilon_v^+ - \epsilon_v^-|/h \quad (3)$$

The thermally averaged rate constant is then given by

$$k(T) = \frac{\sum_v [k_v \exp(-\epsilon_v/k_B T)]}{\sum_v [\exp(-\epsilon_v/k_B T)]} \quad (4)$$

where $\epsilon_v = 1/2(\epsilon_v^+ + \epsilon_v^-)$. The summation in eq 4 extends to levels above the top of the barrier with k_v corresponding to the average separation between vibrational levels in that energy region.

The rate constants calculated in this manner agree qualitatively but not quantitatively with the observed rate constants. To illustrate the discrepancy, we have reversed the procedure described above and determined empirical values of the parameters A and B so as to obtain the "best" fit to the observed rate constants, as illustrated in Figure 3. The corresponding empirical potential

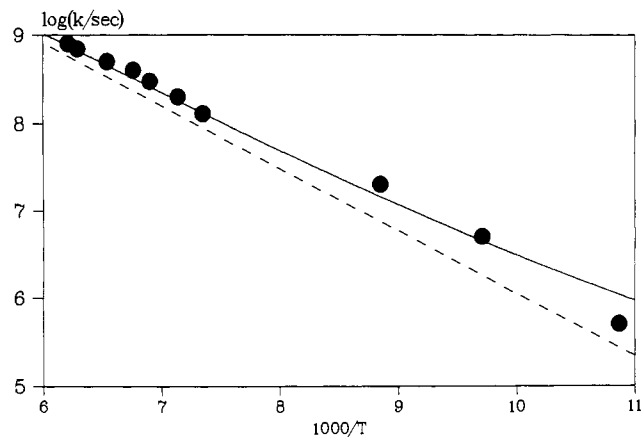


Figure 3. Comparison between observed (circles) and calculated (solid line) inversion rate constants of 1-methylcyclopropyl. The calculations are based on the effective one-dimensional potential depicted by a solid curve in Figure 4. The dashed line corresponds to calculations based on the same potential but restricted to over-the-barrier transitions, so that the separation of the two lines depicts the tunneling contribution to the inversion.

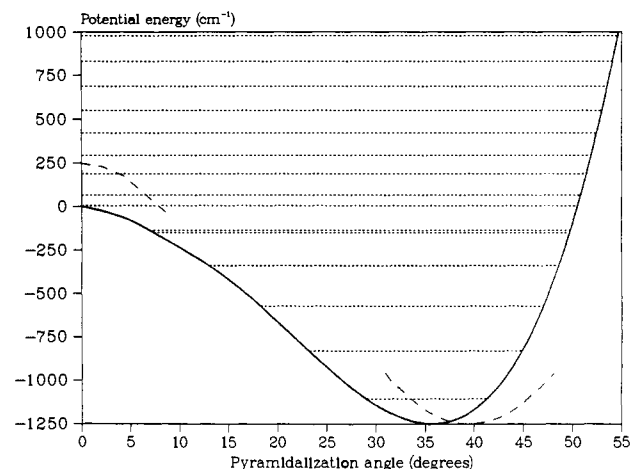


Figure 4. Comparison of the calculated (dashed) and empirical (solid) effective one-dimensional potentials for the inversion of 1-methylcyclopropyl. The energy levels (dotted) refer to the latter corresponding to eq 2 with $A = 4.205 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ and $B = 145 \text{ cm}^{-1}$. The calculated potential refers to a fixed methyl orientation such that the inversion potential is symmetric.

is compared with the calculated potential in Table VI and Figure 4. Since the calculations are restricted to stationary points, only the energy and curvature near these points are shown. While the calculations reproduce the empirical curvatures accurately, they yield a barrier that is too high by almost 20%, a discrepancy similar to that previously observed for oxiranyl.¹

We believe that this discrepancy reflects approximations in both the calculated and empirical potentials. In principle, one can improve the calculated potential by including electron correlation, either perturbatively, as in Møller-Plesset theory¹⁰ or variationally through CI.¹¹ However, this does not seem worthwhile until the empirical barrier is calculated in terms of eq 1 rather than eq 2. Since the discrepancy disappears if we average the calculated barrier over the methyl rotation $[(1495 - 558/2) \text{ cm}^{-1} = 1216 \text{ cm}^{-1}]$ compared to an empirical barrier of 1250 cm^{-1} , it follows that the rotationally averaged empirical barrier is too low. Accordingly, it overestimates the inversion rate at the lowest temperature for which data are available, in keeping with the expectation that the neglected obstruction of the methyl rotation

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will slow down the inversion at low temperatures. There the rotation will proceed by tunneling, which suggests that at low temperatures the inversion may show evidence of a substantial deuterium effect. Unfortunately no experimental data are available to test this suggestion.

The calculations allow an assessment of the contribution of tunneling transfer to the inversion. To this end, we have repeated the calculations including only over-the-barrier transitions. The results are represented by the broken line in Figure 3. They show that tunneling is not negligible for the inversion but becomes the dominant transfer mechanism for $T \leq 110$ K. As pointed out above, the overestimate of the transfer rate at 94 K is ascribed

to the neglect of methyl rotation and should not be interpreted as support for an over-the-barrier mechanism.

The argument presented here is general and should apply to many other inversion processes involving a methyl group. These processes are expected to be slow and deuterium sensitive at low temperatures where tunneling becomes dominant. In the absence of experimental data this conclusion must take the form of a prediction.

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^{51}V NMR as a Probe of Vanadium(V) Coordination to Human Apotransferrin

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Abstract: ^{51}V NMR is a highly sensitive tool to probe the nature of the metal binding sites of human transferrin (Tf). At a field strength of 11.7 T, the two vanadium(V) binding sites in $\text{V}_2\text{-Tf}$ are characterized by ^{51}V chemical shifts at -529.5 and -531.5 ppm versus VOCl_3 . These shifts are assigned to the C- and N-terminal sites, respectively, based on the ^{51}V NMR spectra of vanadate addition to $\text{Fe}_\text{N}\text{-Tf}$ and $\text{Fe}_\text{C}\text{-Tf}$. Tight binding of V(V) to the metal binding site is further ascertained by a linear increase of signal area with V(V) concentration up to an approximate 2:1 stoichiometry, stoichiometric displacement of protein-bound V(V) during titration with Fe(III), and the absence of the -529.5 – -531.5 ppm resonance upon addition of V(V) to Fe_2Tf and Ga_2Tf . The chemical shift of the $\text{V}_\text{C}\text{-Tf}$ resonance is independent of pH (5.8–9.0) and temperature (275–310 K), whereas the $\text{V}_\text{N}\text{-Tf}$ resonance varies slightly (1–2 ppm) with pH and temperature. At relatively high V(V) concentrations and at high ratios of V(V)/Tf, conditions under which a large fraction of the V(V) is present as V oligomers, the ^{51}V resonance of Tf-bound V(V) is not observed, possibly owing to interference by the oligomeric species. Under conditions of tight V(V) binding, the sharpness of the protein-bound resonances is a consequence of the motional characteristics of transferrin, which place the Tf-bound vanadium(V) outside the extreme narrowing limit but within the motional narrowing limit. Several theoretically predicted consequences for an $I = 7/2$ nucleus are observed experimentally, some for the first time in an aqueous protein system. (1) The observed signal intensity of transferrin-bound vanadium(V) compared to that of an equimolar aqueous vanadate sample is substantially reduced, since only one out of four spin-spin relaxation components (i.e., $+1/2 \rightarrow -1/2$ transition) is observed. (2) At 7.05 T the line width is substantially greater than at 11.7 T, and a 5-ppm upfield shift is observed which is attributed to a dynamic frequency shift. (3) The line width of Tf-bound V(V) is not affected by solvent viscosity up to 50% v/v glycerol/buffer. (4) Measurements of signal intensity as a function of pulse length reveal increased ^{51}V precession frequencies in the radio-frequency field, as frequently observed for studies of half-integer quadrupolar nuclei in the solid state. The excitation spectrum is found to be identical for V_C and V_N sites and independent of the V/Tf ratio. At small pulse angles, the fraction of the signal observed is constant and amounts to ca. 20% of that of an equimolar solution of free vanadate, in close agreement with the theoretical prediction. The present study confirms that ^{51}V NMR is a powerful tool to probe V(V) binding to apotransferrin and should also become widely applicable to characterize V(V) binding to other macromolecules.

Transferrins are glycoproteins whose primary function is to bind and transport iron. Transferrins also coordinate a wide variety of other metal ions (e.g., Cu(II), VO^{2+} , Cr(III), Ga(III), Tl(III), etc.),¹ including vanadium(V).²⁻⁴ Human transferrin (Tf) is a single polypeptide chain with two homologous regions each of which binds one metal atom.¹ Elucidation of the similarities and differences between the two metal binding sites continues to be an area of active interest, the results of which should increase our understanding of the functional differences of the two binding sites. The X-ray crystal structure of human lactoferrin shows that the iron binding sites are separated by 42 Å and that the metal binding

ligands at both binding sites are two tyrosine residues, one histidine residue, one aspartate residue, a H_2O (or OH^-) molecule, and an anion (CO_3^{2-} or HCO_3^-).⁵ The fact that human transferrin and lactoferrin share a high degree of sequence homology ($\sim 30\%$),^{1c} that all the metal binding amino acids in lactoferrin are conserved in human transferrin, and that much spectroscopic evidence indicates that the binding sites of lactoferrin and human transferrin are similar, suggests that the metal binding ligands are the same between transferrin and lactoferrin and between the two metal binding sites in human transferrin.

A wide variety of experimental results, however, suggest the two metal binding sites in human transferrin are not equivalent, even though the ligands of both sites may be identical. Structural differences have been inferred from the ESR spectra of the Fe(III)-,⁶ VO^{2+} -,⁷ Cu(II)-, and Cr(III)-bound⁸ transferrin derivatives

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