

Introduction to Density Functional Theory

a short PhD course
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by

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Atomistic approaches

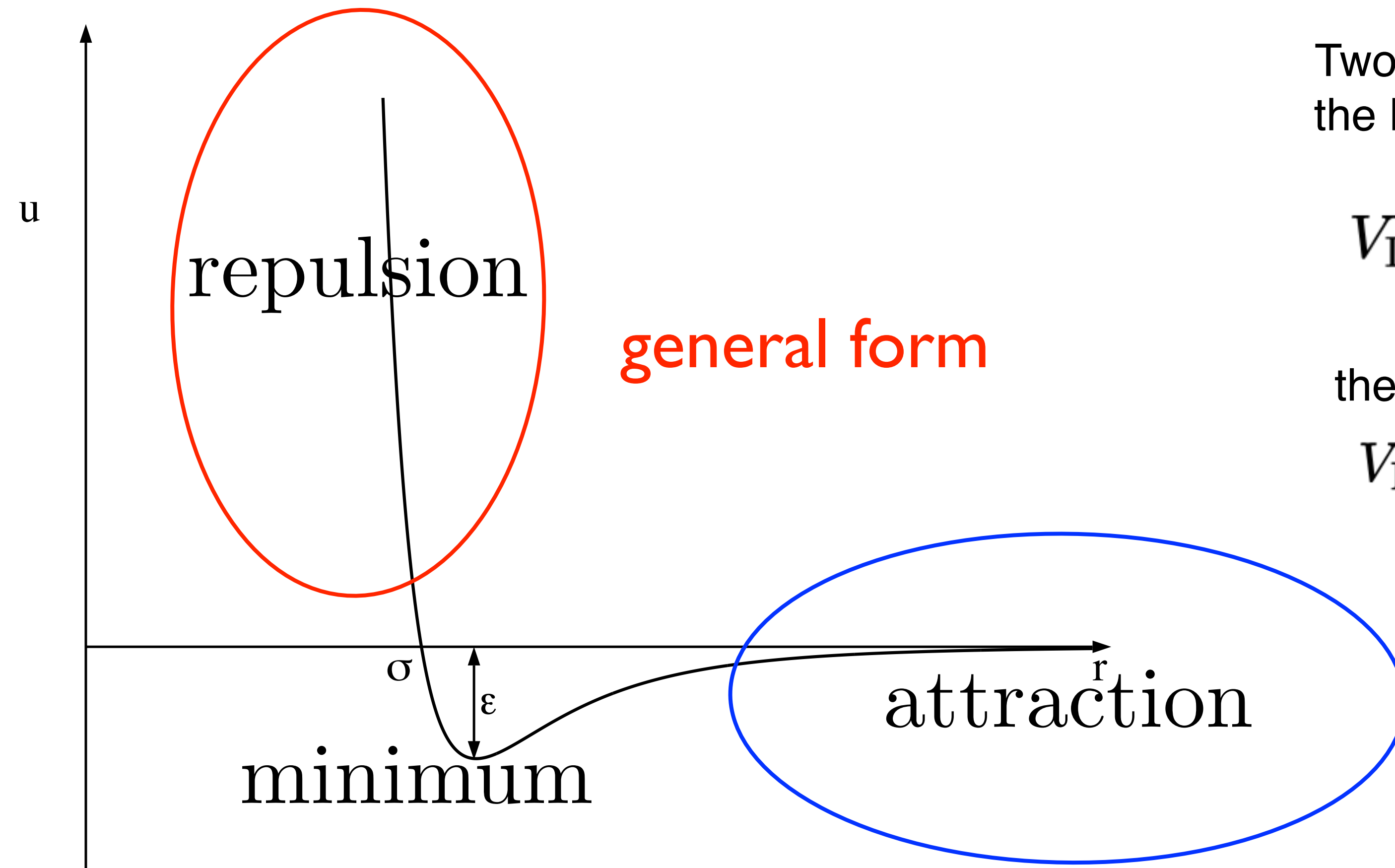
We can describe a molecule, a material, ... as a system of **atoms** with given positions in space.

We can think about atoms interacting through **interatomic potentials**.

The **total energy** of the system can be obtained by **summing all the interactions between the atoms** using such potentials.

Interatomic potentials can have different **functional forms**.

A typical 2-body effective potential



general form

Two examples of a specific functional form:
the Lennard-Jones potential:

$$V_{\text{LJ}}(r) = 4\epsilon \left[\left(\frac{\sigma}{r} \right)^{12} - \left(\frac{\sigma}{r} \right)^6 \right]$$

the Morse potential:

$$V_{\text{M}}(r) = D_e (e^{-2a(r-r_e)} - 2e^{-a(r-r_e)})$$

with parameters fitted
from experimental data

a strong repulsion for small r and a weak attraction at large r .

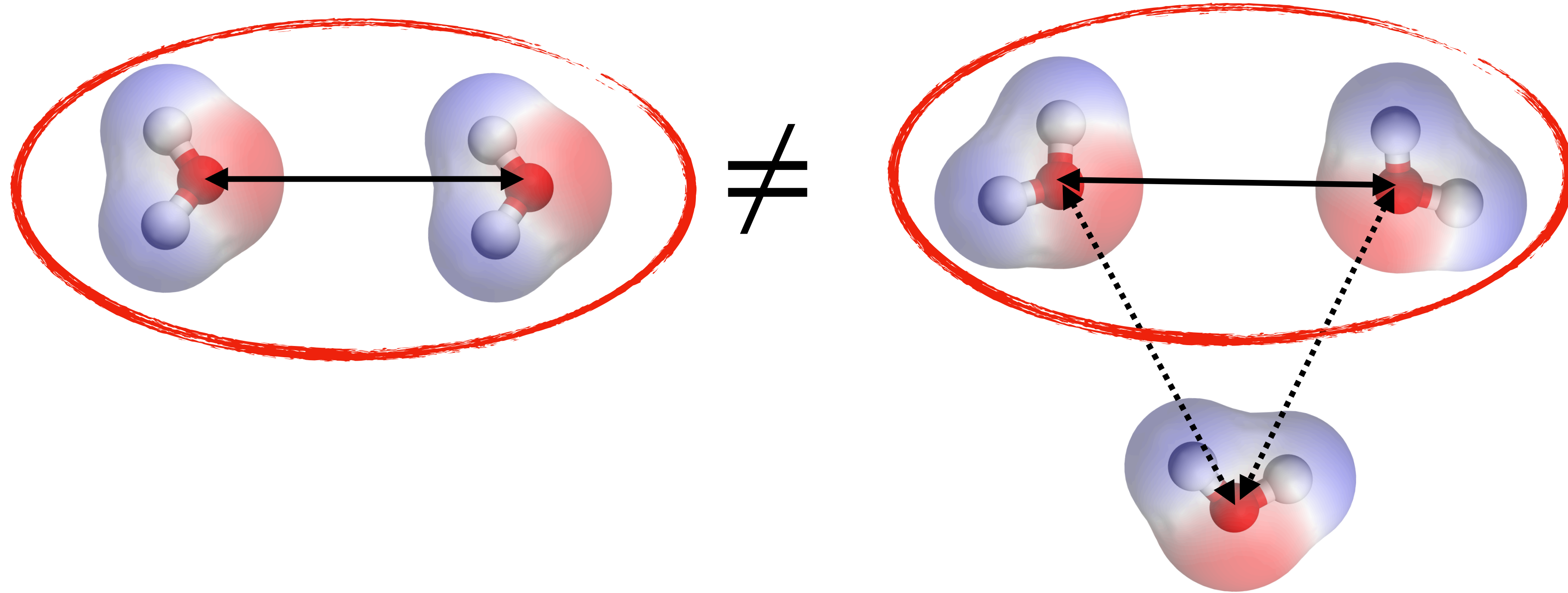
consequence of the Pauli exclusion principle.

core repulsion

mutual polarization of each molecule;

van der Waals

A typical 2-body effective potential



REMARK:

we need a simple form for $u(\mathbf{r}) \Rightarrow$ we use an **effective** interaction:

it is somehow “phenomenological”, since takes into account the environment;
it is an approximation, since in general, 3-, 4- ... many-body terms are present

Limits of interatomic potentials

interactions between electrons and nuclei and hence interatomic interactions are quantum mechanical in nature =>

we need to describe them => but the “true” interactions cannot be cast into an analytical functional form!

Hence all analytical interatomic potentials are necessarily approximations.

A typical problem of interatomic potentials: **non-transferability**
(the effective potential in two different environments is different!)

we thus are going to afford
more accurate atomistic simulations that **consider
the full quantum mechanical nature of the
interaction between electrons and nuclei**
(**“ab-initio”** or **“first-principles”** methods,
i.e. no empirical parameters
or fit from experimental data)

From foundations...

- ab-initio methods
- nuclei and electrons
- Born-Oppenheimer approximation
- limits of one-electron scheme
- density functional theory:
 - Hohenberg-Kohn theorem
 - functionals
 - one-electron (Kohn-Sham) equations and self-consistent cycle

... to practical implementation (towards Quantum Espresso suite of codes)

with physical approximation and numerical issues



Ab-initio methods

PURPOSES: to describe and explain material properties at a **quantum** and **atomic** level

INGREDIENTS: Electrons / nuclei / interactions; NO external parameters

METHOD: solution of the Schroedinger equation through:

- modeling (physical approximations)
- algorithms for a numerical solution

PECULIARITIES: reliable / predictive power / extensively used in materials of medium complexity and for a wide range of physical properties (mainly related to the ground state; extended with limitations also to excited states -e.g. optical spectra-)

Ab initio simulations

A many-body problem:

$$H_{tot} = \sum_i \frac{\mathbf{p}_i^2}{2m} + \sum_I \frac{\mathbf{P}_I^2}{2M_I} + \sum_i V_{nucl}(\mathbf{r}_i) + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i \neq j} \frac{e^2}{r_{ij}} + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{I \neq J} \frac{Z_I Z_J e^2}{R_{IJ}}$$

$$V_{nucl}(\mathbf{r}) = - \sum_I \frac{Z_I e^2}{|\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{R}_I|}$$

$$r_{ij} = |\mathbf{r}_i - \mathbf{r}_j|$$

$$R_{IJ} = |\mathbf{R}_I - \mathbf{R}_J|$$

Indicating with V the total (e-e, e-nucl., nucl-nucl., ext.) potential...

Ab initio simulations

... the time-dependent Schr eq. reads:

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \Phi(r, R; t)}{\partial t} = \left(-\frac{\hbar^2}{2M} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial R_I^2} - \frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial r_i^2} + V(r, R) \right) \Phi(r, R; t)$$

A physical approximation: Born-Oppenheimer (adiabatic) ($M \gg m$)

Classic eq. of motion for nuclei fixing electrons $\rightarrow E(\mathbf{R})$:

$$M\ddot{R}_I = -\frac{\partial E(R)}{\partial R_I}$$

$$\left(-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial r_i^2} + V(r, R) \right) \Psi(r|R) = E(R) \Psi(r|R)$$

electronic Hamiltonian for nuclei fixed in $\{\mathbf{R}\}$

Hartree-Fock method for electrons

- Also the **electronic problem** is a difficult one (**many-body, interacting**) => yet another physical approx. is necessary
- One-electron approx.: interacting but independent electrons (NO correlations):
- the ground-state can be written as an individual Slater determinant (antisymmetrized product of one-electron spin-orbitals)

$$\Psi_0(\mathbf{r}_1\sigma_1, \mathbf{r}_2\sigma_2, \dots, \mathbf{r}_N\sigma_N) = \mathcal{A} \{ \psi_1(\mathbf{r}_1\sigma_1) \psi_2(\mathbf{r}_2\sigma_2) \dots \psi_N(\mathbf{r}_N\sigma_N) \}$$

$$\psi_i(\mathbf{r}\sigma) = \phi_i(\mathbf{r})\chi_i(\sigma)$$

Hartree-Fock method for electrons

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e.g. for 2 electrons
(He atom):

$$\begin{aligned}\Psi(\mathbf{x}_1, \mathbf{x}_2) &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \{ \chi_1(\mathbf{x}_1) \chi_2(\mathbf{x}_2) - \chi_1(\mathbf{x}_2) \chi_2(\mathbf{x}_1) \} \\ &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \begin{vmatrix} \chi_1(\mathbf{x}_1) & \chi_2(\mathbf{x}_1) \\ \chi_1(\mathbf{x}_2) & \chi_2(\mathbf{x}_2) \end{vmatrix},\end{aligned}$$

How to overcome the limits of the Hartree-Fock method?

- better approximations to the many-body wavefunction, for instance:
 - use a combination of different Slater determinants (“configuration interaction”, CI)
 - ...

How to overcome the limits of one-electron methods?

- Instead of looking for better approximations to the many-body wavefunction, let's follow an alternative way:
- Focus on the **one-particle electron density $n(\mathbf{r})$** which is easier to treat (less degrees of freedom)
- **HOENBERG-KOHN THEOREM: correspondence ground state of a system characterized by $n(\mathbf{r}) \Leftrightarrow$ external potential**

Great idea ! **Walter Kohn:**
Nobel prize in Chemistry, 1998

$$H_e = H_{int} + V_{ext}$$

$H_e, H_{int}, V_{ext}, T, V_{ee}$
are many-body operators

$$H_{int} = T + V_{ee} = \sum_i \frac{\mathbf{p}_i^2}{2m} + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i \neq j} \frac{e^2}{r_{ij}}$$

$$V_{ext} = \sum_i v_{ext}(\mathbf{r}_i) = \sum_i \int v_{ext}(\mathbf{r}) \delta(\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}_i) d\mathbf{r}$$

$$v_{ext}(\mathbf{r}) \equiv V_{nucl}(\mathbf{r}) = - \sum_I \frac{Z_I e^2}{|\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{R}_I|} + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{I \neq J} \frac{Z_I Z_J e^2}{R_{IJ}}$$

$$\Psi_0(\mathbf{r}_1, \mathbf{r}_2, \dots, \mathbf{r}_N):$$

Many-body wfc

$$n(\mathbf{r}) = \langle \Psi_0 | \sum_i \delta(\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}_i) | \Psi_0 \rangle:$$

Single-particle density

$$\langle \Psi_0 | V_{ext} | \Psi_0 \rangle = \int n(\mathbf{r}) v_{ext}(\mathbf{r}) d\mathbf{r}$$

(1 PART): $V_{ext} \Rightarrow n(\mathbf{r})$ is trivial:

$$v_{ext}(\mathbf{r}) \Rightarrow \Psi_0[v_{ext}] \Rightarrow n(\mathbf{r}) \quad \text{i.e.,} \quad \boxed{n(\mathbf{r}) = F[v_{ext}]}$$

(2 PART): $V_{ext} \Leftarrow n(\mathbf{r})$ is NOT trivial: (per absurdum)

$$\boxed{v_{ext} \neq \bar{v}_{ext} \Rightarrow n(\mathbf{r}) \neq \bar{n}(\mathbf{r})}$$

(and not only for a rigid shift)

i.e.,

$$\boxed{n(\mathbf{r}) \Rightarrow V_{ext}(\mathbf{r})}$$

Let be: $\frac{H}{H} = H_{int} + \frac{V_{ext}}{V_{ext}}$ with: $\frac{\Psi_0}{\Psi_0}, \frac{E_0}{E_0};$

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \bar{\Psi}_0 | H | \bar{\Psi}_0 \rangle &= \langle \bar{\Psi}_0 | H_{int} + V_{ext} + \bar{V}_{ext} - \bar{V}_{ext} | \bar{\Psi}_0 \rangle \\ &= \bar{E}_0 + \langle \bar{\Psi}_0 | V_{ext} - \bar{V}_{ext} | \bar{\Psi}_0 \rangle \\ &= \bar{E}_0 + \int \bar{n}(\mathbf{r}) [v_{ext}(\mathbf{r}) - \bar{v}_{ext}(\mathbf{r})] d\mathbf{r} \end{aligned}$$

For the variational principle:

$$\langle \Psi_0 | H | \Psi_0 \rangle < \langle \bar{\Psi}_0 | H | \bar{\Psi}_0 \rangle$$

i.e.:

$$E_0 < \overline{E}_0 + \int \overline{n}(\mathbf{r})[v_{ext}(\mathbf{r}) - \overline{v}_{ext}(\mathbf{r})]d\mathbf{r}$$

Similarly:

$$\overline{E}_0 < E_0 + \int n(\mathbf{r})[\overline{v}_{ext}(\mathbf{r}) - v_{ext}(\mathbf{r})]d\mathbf{r}$$

Combining the two we must exclude that

$$n = \overline{n}$$

Ok, $n(\mathbf{r})$ is a fundamental quantity...

But what will we do in practice to solve the Schr. eq.?
How to reduce the number of variables from $3N$ to 3 ?

The path:

**From HK theorem
to single electron (Kohn-Sham) eqs.**

mapping the interacting system into a non-interacting one
(that can thus be cast into a **one-electron problem**)
with the same density $n(\mathbf{r})$

next lecture

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with the same density $n(\mathbf{r})$**

now we jump to this one-electron problem

HK theorem and functionals

Consequence of the HK theorem:

E is a **functional** $E[n(\mathbf{r})]$ of $n(\mathbf{r})$

interacting el.
potential ↓

external
potential ↓

$$\begin{aligned} E[n(\mathbf{r})] &= \langle \Psi | T + U + V | \Psi \rangle = \langle \Psi | T + U | \Psi \rangle + \langle \Psi | V | \Psi \rangle \\ &= F[n(\mathbf{r})] + \int n(\mathbf{r}) V(\mathbf{r}) d\mathbf{r} \end{aligned}$$

$F[n(\mathbf{r})]$ is a **universal** functional of $n(\mathbf{r})$ (and not of V)
(unknown!)

next lecture

Problem: determine $n(\mathbf{r})$ which minimizes $E[n(\mathbf{r})]$

Kohn-Sham equations (I)

The system of interacting electrons is mapped on to a non-interacting electrons having the same density $n(\mathbf{r})$

For non-interacting electrons:

$$n(\mathbf{r}) = \sum_i |\psi_i(\mathbf{r})|^2$$

(for all the fully occupied orbitals;
otherwise, insert an occupation factor)

<= link between $n(\mathbf{r})$ and single-electron wavefunctions

with $\psi_i(\mathbf{r})$ **one-electron** orthonormal orbitals (Kohn-Sham), satisfying:

$$\left(-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \nabla^2 + \underbrace{V(\mathbf{r}) + V_H[n(\mathbf{r})] + V_{xc}[n(\mathbf{r})]}_{= V_{KS}[n(\mathbf{r})]} \right) \psi_i(\mathbf{r}) = \epsilon_i \psi_i(\mathbf{r})$$

in practice, this is V_{nucl}

next lecture

Kohn-Sham equations (II)

recover the expression for the energy:

$$E[n(\mathbf{r})] = F[n(\mathbf{r})] + \int n(\mathbf{r})V(\mathbf{r})d\mathbf{r}$$

From the mapping on to a non-interacting system:

$$F[n(\mathbf{r})] = T_s[n(\mathbf{r})] + E_H[n(\mathbf{r})] + E_{xc}[n(\mathbf{r})]$$

with:

$$T_s[n(\mathbf{r})] = -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \sum_i \int \Psi_i^*(\mathbf{r}) \nabla^2 \Psi_i(\mathbf{r}) d\mathbf{r} \quad \text{kinetic energy of non-interacting electrons}$$

$$E_H[n(\mathbf{r})] = \frac{e^2}{2} \int \frac{n(\mathbf{r})n(\mathbf{r}')}{|\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}'|} d\mathbf{r}d\mathbf{r}' \quad \text{Hartree energy: electrostatic energy of non-interacting electrons}$$

$$E_{xc}[n(\mathbf{r})]$$

exchange-correlation energy:

contains all the remaining terms!!! (unknown)

next lecture

let's recap...

Ab-initio simulations

To summarize up to here:

- need of transferable methods
- at the atomistic level
- giving results with predictive capabilities

=> ab-initio methods:

- ingredients: nuclei, electrons, interactions

how to solve the many-body Schroedinger equation?

How to solve the many-body Schr. eq.?

A first physical approximation

- the adiabatic (Born-Oppenheimer) approx. ($M \gg m$): decouples electronic and nuclear problems

Density Functional Theory (DFT) for the electronic problem: from a many-body wave function ($3N$ variables) to the electron density $n(\mathbf{r})$ (3 variables):

- use of the variational principle: ok for occupied states (not excited)
- map the interacting system into a non-interacting system and factorize $\Rightarrow$
- **one-electron** Schr. eq.

How to solve the one-electron Schr. eq.?

Given the one-electron Schroedinger equation (i.e., the Kohn-Sham eq.) how to proceed to really solve it?

$$H_{KS}\psi_i \equiv (T + V + V_H[n] + V_{xc}[n]) \psi_i = \epsilon_i \psi_i$$

where

- $n(\mathbf{r}) = \sum_i f_i |\psi_i(\mathbf{r})|^2$ is the charge density, f_i are occupation numbers
- V is the nuclear (pseudo-)potential acting on electrons
- $V_H[n]$ is the Hartree potential, $V_H(\mathbf{r}) = e^2 \int \frac{n(\mathbf{r}')}{|\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}'|} d\mathbf{r}'$
- $V_{xc}[n]$ is the exchange-correlation potential. (what is it??? we'll be back later on that...)

Now let's focus on this issue:

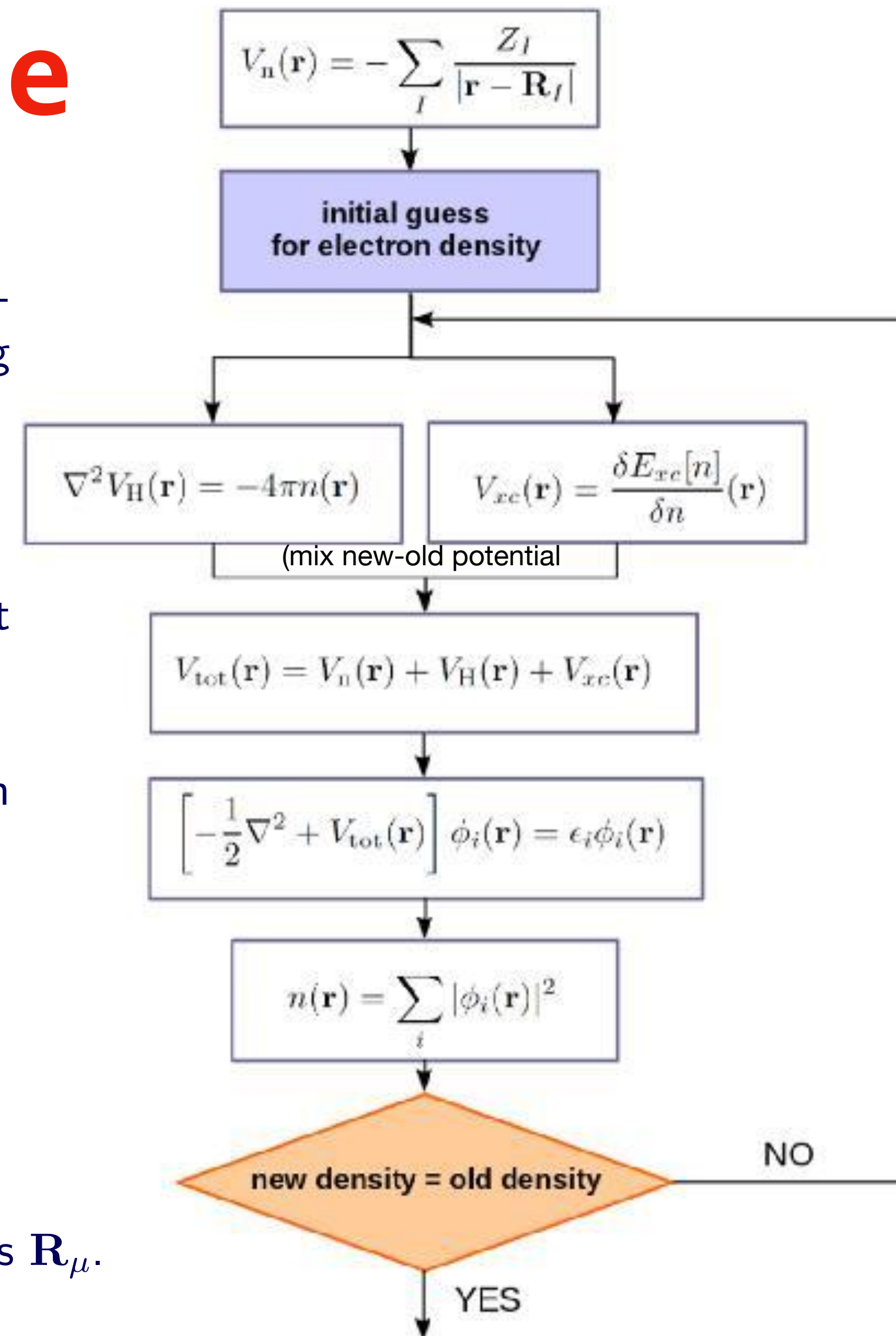
the potential depends on the solution itself!

How to solve the one-electron Schr. eq.?

Self-consistent cycle

In a self-consistent approach, we need to find the self-consistent charge density (or potential), performing the following operations:

- Calculate the potential from the charge density
- Solve (*diagonalize*) the Kohn-Sham equations at fixed potential
- Calculate the charge density from Kohn-Sham orbitals



The total energy depends upon all atomic positions $\mathbf{R}_\mu$.

How to solve the one-electron Schr. eq.?

Other issues:

The formal derivation of the KS equations is exact, but approximations are necessary for the practical implementation of the theory:

- how to describe ψ ?
- how to describe V_{nucl} ?
- how to describe V_{xc} ?
- how to perform the integrations?

How to solve the one-electron Schr. eq.?

- how to describe ψ ?

The solution of the Kohn-Sham problem $H_{KS}\psi = \epsilon\psi$ at fixed potential is (usually) the toughest problem. How to proceed? By expanding ψ into some suitable **basis set** $\{\phi_i\}$ as

$$\psi(\mathbf{r}) = \sum_i c_i \phi_i(\mathbf{r}).$$

For an orthonormal basis set, we solve the secular equations

$$\sum_j (H_{ij} - \epsilon \delta_{ij}) c_j = 0$$

If we expand the unknown ψ onto a basis set, we transform the problem into one of linear algebra

where $H_{ij} = \langle \phi_i | H_{KS} | \phi_j \rangle$ are the *matrix elements* of the Hamiltonian.

For a non-orthonormal basis set, we solve the generalized problem:

$$\sum_j (H_{ij} - \epsilon S_{ij}) c_j = 0$$

where $S_{ij} = \langle \phi_i | \phi_j \rangle$ is the *overlap matrix*.

Diagonalization algorithms are well known in linear algebra, but in practice, one has to resort to smarter *iterative* algorithms, allowing *not* to store those matrices.

next lecture

Plane-wave basis set - 1

A PW basis set for states of wave vector $\mathbf{k}$ is defined as

$$\phi_{\mathbf{k}+\mathbf{G}}(\mathbf{r}) = \langle \mathbf{r} | \mathbf{k} + \mathbf{G} \rangle = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\mathcal{N}\Omega}} e^{i(\mathbf{k}+\mathbf{G})\cdot\mathbf{r}}, \quad \frac{\hbar^2}{2m} |\mathbf{k} + \mathbf{G}|^2 \leq E_{cut}$$

Ω = unit cell volume, $\mathcal{N}\Omega$ = crystal volume, E_{cut} = cutoff on the kinetic energy of PWs (in order to have a finite number of PWs!). The PW basis set is *complete* for $E_{cut} \rightarrow \infty$ and *orthonormal*: $\langle \mathbf{k} + \mathbf{G} | \mathbf{k} + \mathbf{G}' \rangle = \delta_{\mathbf{G}\mathbf{G}'}$

In a PW basis set one works with *Fourier components* ($c_{i,\mathbf{k}+\mathbf{G}}$ below):

$$|\psi_i\rangle = \sum_{\mathbf{G}} c_{i,\mathbf{k}+\mathbf{G}} |\mathbf{k} + \mathbf{G}\rangle$$

$$c_{i,\mathbf{k}+\mathbf{G}} = \langle \mathbf{k} + \mathbf{G} | \psi_i \rangle = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\mathcal{N}\Omega}} \int \psi_i(\mathbf{r}) e^{-i(\mathbf{k}+\mathbf{G})\cdot\mathbf{r}} d\mathbf{r} = \tilde{\psi}_i(\mathbf{k} + \mathbf{G}).$$

Real-space quantities can be obtained on a grid using Fast Fourier Transform.

Plane-wave basis set - 2

- Plane Waves:
 - slow convergence with respect to basis set size (many more PWs than localized functions needed)
 - require periodicity: in finite systems, *supercells* must be introduced
 - + easy to evaluate convergence quality (just increase a single parameter, the *cutoff*)
 - + easy to use (Fourier transform)

Periodicity needed !

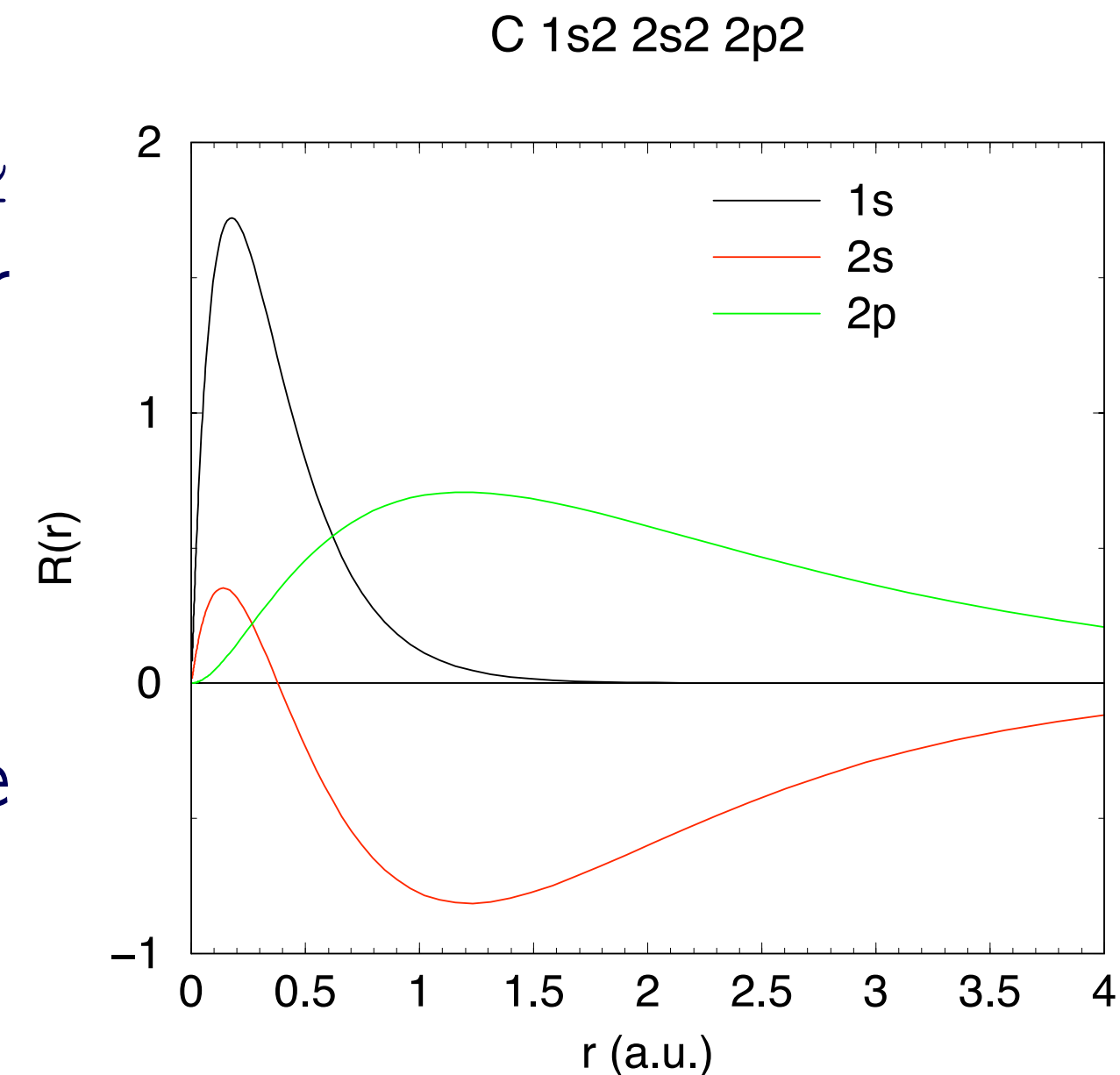
Pseudopotentials - o

- how to describe V_{nucl} ?

From simple Fourier analysis: length scale $\delta \longrightarrow$ Fourier components up to $q \sim 2\pi/\delta$. In a solid, this means $\sim 4\pi(2\pi/\delta)^3/3\Omega_{BZ}$ PWs (volume of the sphere of radius q divided by $\Omega_{BZ} = 8\pi^3/\Omega$, volume of the Brillouin Zone).

Estimate for diamond: $1s$ wavefunction has $\delta \simeq 0.1$ a.u., $\Omega = (2\pi)^3/(a_0^3/4)$ with lattice parameter $a_0 = 6.74$ a.u. $\longrightarrow$ 250,000 PWs! We need to:

- get rid of core states
- get rid of orthogonality wiggles close to the nucleus

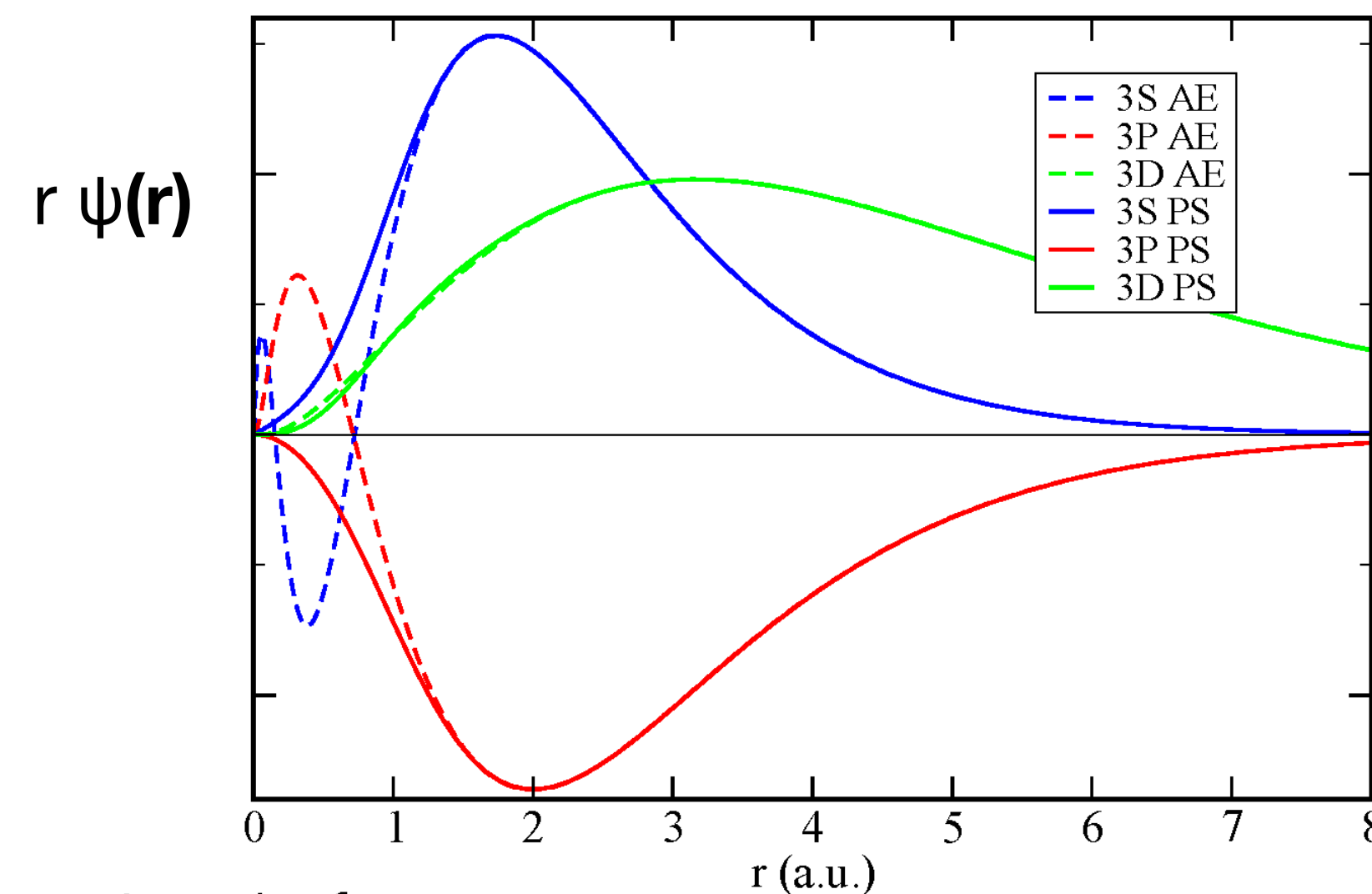


Solution: **Pseudopotentials** (PP). A smooth effective potential that reproduces the effect of the nucleus plus core electrons on valence electrons.

Pseudopotentials - 1

Norm-Conserving Pseudopotentials

Electron-ionic core interactions are typically represented by a nonlocal *Norm-Conserving Pseudopotential* (NCP): a soft potential, no core states, no orthonormality wiggles.



AE=“all electron”
(i.e. calculations including
also core electrons)

PS=“pseudopotential”

One pseudo potential for each angular momentum :

$$V_l^{\text{ps}} = V_{\text{loc}}(r) + V_l(r)P_l = V(r) + \sum_m Y_{lm}(\mathbf{r})V(r)\delta(r-r')Y_{lm}^*(\mathbf{r}') \quad \text{with } V_{\text{loc}}(r) = -Z_V e^2 / r$$

In many systems, NCP's allow accurate calculations with moderate-size ($E_c \sim 10 - 20 Ry$) plane-wave basis sets (explained in the following)

Pseudopotentials - 2

Norm-Conserving Pseudopotentials (continued)

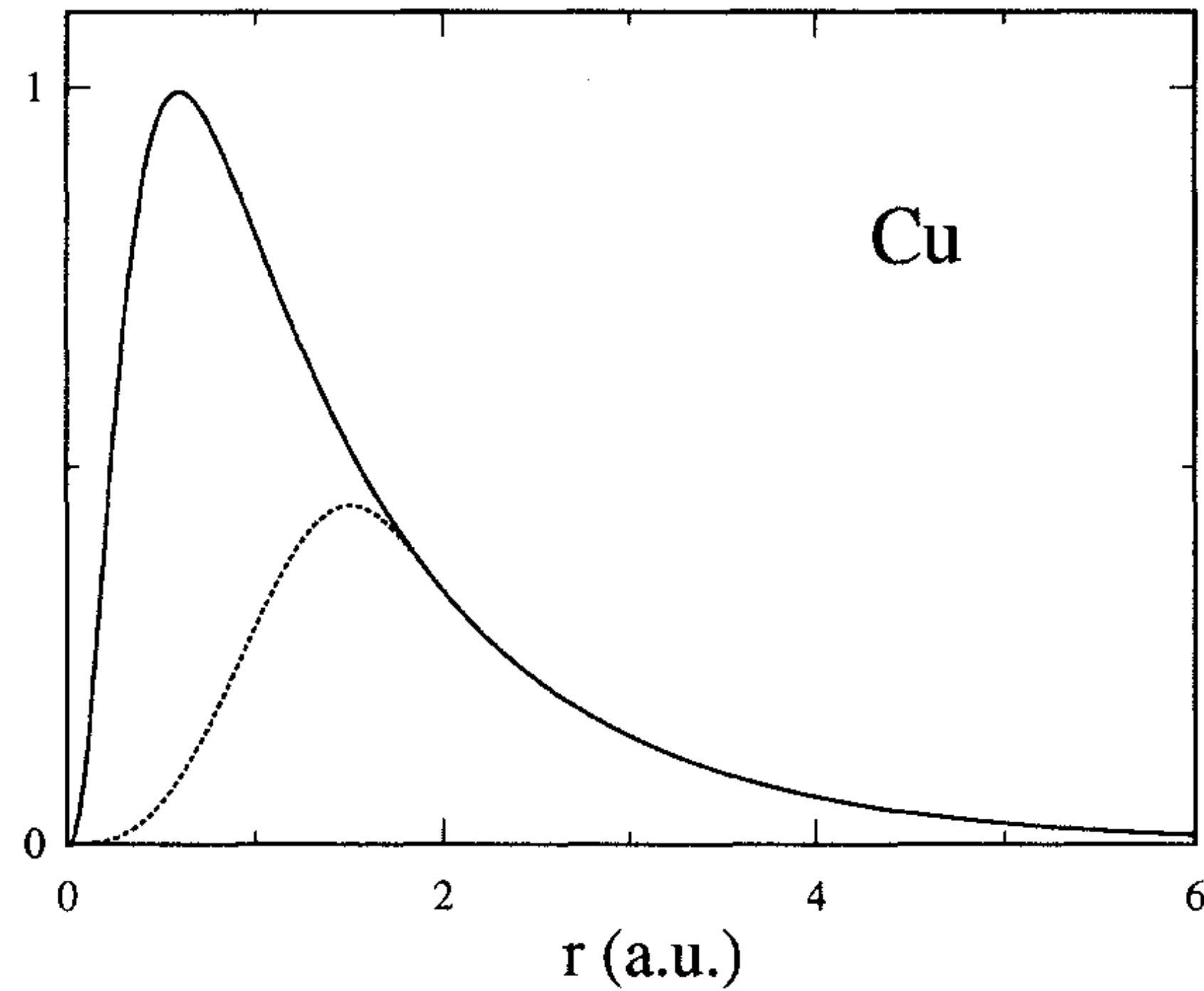
NCPP's based on atomic DFT calculations, were introduced by Hamann, Schlüter, Chiang in 1979. For a given reference atomic configuration, they must meet the following conditions:

- $\epsilon_l^{ps} = \epsilon_l^{ae}$ **<= atomic energy levels must be reproduced**
- $\phi_l^{ps}(r)$ is nodeless
- $\phi_l^{ps}(r) = \phi_l^{ae}(r)$ for $r > r_c$ **<= coincidence between the “true” and “pseudo” wfc in the external region**
- $\int_{r < r_c} |\phi_l^{ps}(r)|^2 r^2 dr = \int_{r < r_c} |\phi_l^{ae}(r)|^2 r^2 dr$ **<= norm-conserving**

where $\phi_l^{ae}(r)$ is the radial part of the atomic valence wavefunction with l angular momentum, ϵ_l^{ae} its orbital energy. The *core radius* r_c is approximately at the outermost maximum of the wavefunction.

Pseudopotentials - 3

“soft” or “ultrasoft” pseudopotentials: release the condition of norm-conserving =>
Smoother potentials => smoother wfc => less plane waves to describe them (see later)



running the pw.x code:

In the input:

```
...  
/  
&electrons  
...  
  mixing_beta    = 0.5  
  conv_thr        = 1D-10  
  electron_maxstep = 100  
/
```

In the output:

Self-consistent Calculation

iteration # 1 ecut= 50.00 Ry beta= 0.50
Davidson diagonalization with overlap
ethr = 1.00E-02, avg # of iterations = 2.2

total cpu time spent up to now is 20.0 secs

total energy = -202.68145378 Ry
estimated scf accuracy < 0.45007650 Ry

iteration # 2 ecut= 50.00 Ry beta= 0.50

....
....

End of self-consistent calculation

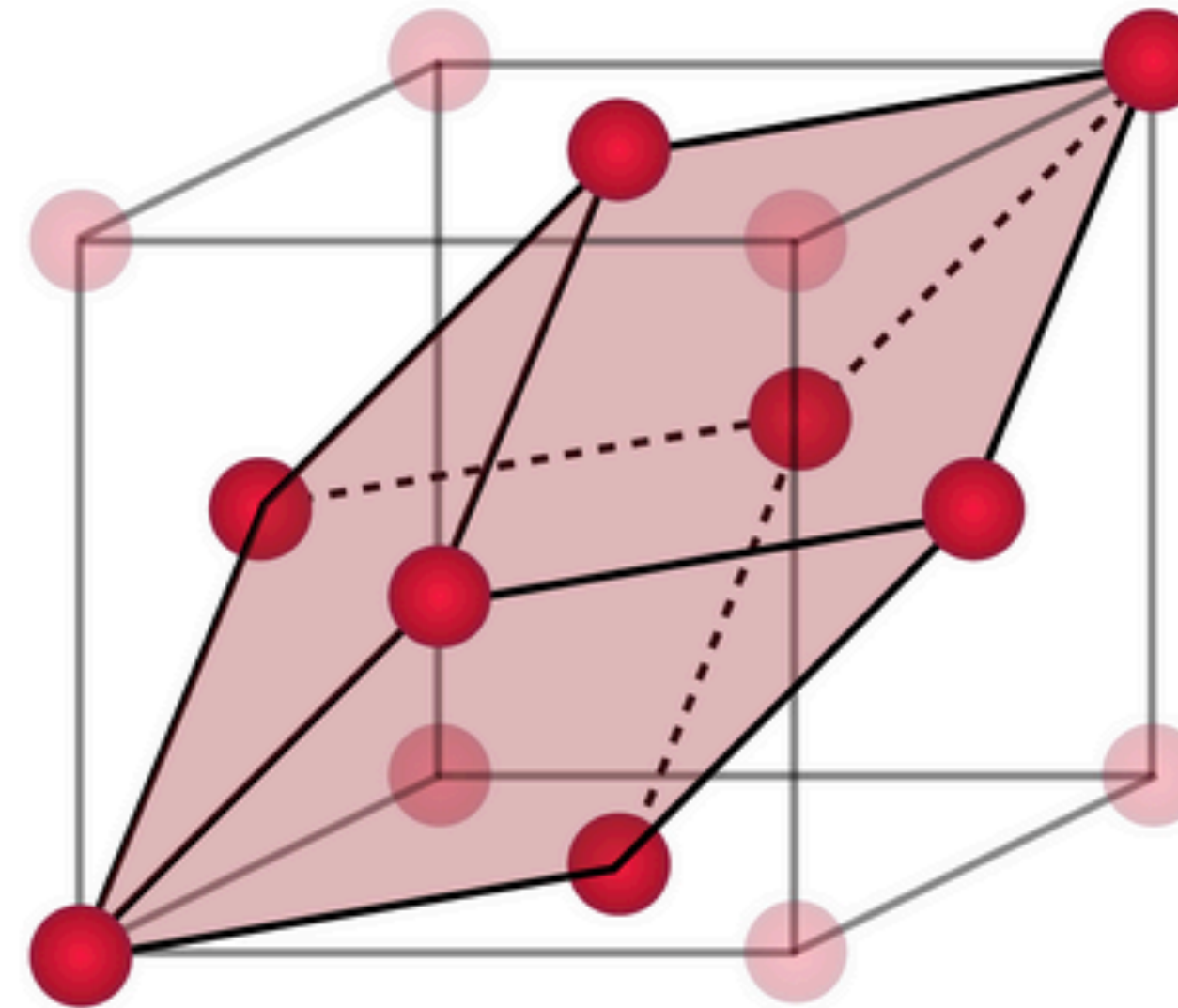
convergence has been achieved in 13 iterations

running the pw.x code:

In the input:

```
...  
/  
&system  
  ibrav= 2, celldm(1) = 7.5,  
  ntyp= 1,  
  nat= 1  
....  
/  
....  
ATOMIC_SPECIES  
Al  26.98  Al.pz-vbc.UPF  
  
ATOMIC_POSITIONS alat  
Al   0.  0.  0.  0  0  0  
....
```

fcc Bravais lattice



describe the lattice vectors
of a periodically repeated cell
(or indicate in an alternative way
which is the Bravais lattice and
which is the lattice parameter)
and the internal atomic positions

Input File Description

Program: pw.x / PWscf / Quantum ESPRESSO (version: 7.2)

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[X](#) | [x](#) | [y](#) | [z](#) | [if_pos\(1\)](#) | [if_pos\(2\)](#) | [if_pos\(3\)](#)

[K_POINTS](#)

[nks](#) | [xk_x](#) | [xk_y](#) | [xk_z](#) | [wk](#) | [nk1](#) | [nk2](#) | [nk3](#) | [sk1](#) | [sk2](#) | [sk3](#)