

## Basis set convergence of post-CCSD contributions to molecular atomization energies

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Basis set convergence of correlation effects on molecular atomization energies beyond the coupled cluster with singles and doubles (CCSD) approximation has been studied near the one-particle basis set limit. Quasiperturbative connected triple excitations, (T), converge more rapidly than  $L^{-3}$  (where  $L$  is the highest angular momentum represented in the basis set), while higher-order connected triples,  $T_3$ –(T), converge more slowly—empirically,  $\propto L^{-5/2}$ . Quasiperturbative connected quadruple excitations, (Q), converge smoothly as  $\propto L^{-3}$  starting with the cc-pVTZ basis set, while the cc-pVDZ basis set causes overshooting of the contribution in highly polar systems. Higher-order connected quadruples display only weak, but somewhat erratic, basis set dependence. Connected quintuple excitations converge very rapidly with the basis set, to the point where even an unpolarized double-zeta basis set yields useful numbers. In cases where fully iterative coupled cluster up to connected quintuples (CCSDTQ5) calculations are not an option, CCSDTQ(5) (i.e., coupled cluster up to connected quadruples plus a quasiperturbative connected quintuples correction) cannot be relied upon in the presence of significant nondynamical correlation, whereas CCSDTQ(5)<sub>Λ</sub> represents a viable alternative. Connected quadruples corrections to the core-valence contribution are thermochemically significant in some systems. We propose an additional variant of W4 theory [A. Karton *et al.*, *J. Chem. Phys.* **125**, 144108 (2006)], denoted W4.4 theory, which is shown to yield a rms deviation from experimental atomization energies (active thermochemical tables, ATcT) of only 0.05 kcal/mol for systems for which ATcT values are available. We conclude that “ $3\sigma \leq 1$  kJ/mol” thermochemistry is feasible with current technology, but that the more ambitious goal of  $\pm 10$  cm<sup>-1</sup> accuracy is illusory, at least for atomization energies. © 2007 American Institute of Physics. [DOI: 10.1063/1.2755751]

### I. INTRODUCTION

There exists an extensive literature on one-particle basis set convergence at the self-consistent field (SCF) and coupled cluster with all singles and doubles (CCSD) levels. Basis set convergence at the SCF level is fairly rapid (except for “inner polarization” issues caused by back bonding into  $d$  orbitals of second row elements in high oxidation states, see Ref. 1 and references therein), and at least for atoms and diatomic molecules, exact numerical solutions are available on a semiroutine basis.<sup>2</sup>

Basis set convergence of the MP2 and CCSD correlation energies is likewise well studied: The main reference point here is explicitly correlated quantum chemistry, which exhibits vastly more rapid basis set convergence than standard one-particle Gaussian basis sets (see e.g., Valeev<sup>3</sup> for a very recent review). While some authors argue in favor of supplanting Gaussian basis sets altogether with explicitly correlated methods, others have shown that very high accuracy

can be achieved by judicious combination of very large Gaussian basis sets with extrapolation techniques that are motivated either by the physics of pair correlation energies in heliumlike systems<sup>4–8</sup> or empirically<sup>9,10</sup> (see also Feller and Peterson<sup>11</sup> and references therein).

Basis set convergence beyond the CCSD level has been much less well studied, and remains an issue even for advocates of explicitly correlated methods, as the computationally efficient extension of the latter beyond CCSD is a nontrivial challenge. An early paper by Klopper *et al.*<sup>12</sup> pointed out that at the CCSD(T) level—i.e., CCSD plus a quasiperturbative triples correction,<sup>13,14</sup> often cited as “the gold standard in quantum chemistry”<sup>15</sup>—the (T) term of the correlation energy converges much more rapidly with the basis set than the CCSD term. More recent studies that focus at least partly on the (T) term include the work of Schwenke<sup>10</sup> and of Feller *et al.*<sup>16</sup> Allen and co-workers, in a string of studies based on their focal-point approximation,<sup>17</sup> have studied convergence in many systems on an *ad hoc* basis. Karton *et al.*<sup>18</sup> addressed basis set convergence for connected quadruple and quintuple excitations in some detail, although not as close to

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TABLE I. Convergence of the contribution of valence quasiperturbative connected triples, CCSD(T)-CCSD, to the total atomization energy (kcal/mol). Unaugmented cc-pVnZ basis sets used throughout on hydrogen. C<sub>2</sub> and CO AV7Z data obtained using revised AV7Z basis set for carbon (Ref. 27). Schwenke AV{T,Q}Z numbers are not given explicitly, as they are indistinguishable from the AV{T,Q}Z column. aug-cc-pV(7+d)Z basis set for sulfur obtained by expanding even-tempered *d* series from aug-cc-pV7Z inward with one additional *d*.

	A+B/L <sup>3</sup>				Schwenke		A+B/L <sup>3</sup> +C/L <sup>4</sup>	
	AV{T,Q}Z	AV{Q,5}Z	AV{5,6}Z	AV{6,7}Z	AV{Q,5}Z	AV{5,6}Z	AV{Q,5,6}Z	AV{5,6,7}Z
B <sub>2</sub>	9.809	9.794	9.768	N/A	9.764	9.762	9.753	—
C <sub>2</sub>	19.507	19.507	19.467	19.460	19.460	19.458	19.444	19.453
N <sub>2</sub>	9.509	9.548	9.523	9.519	9.512	9.516	9.508	9.513
O <sub>2</sub>	8.381	8.414	8.394	8.391	8.373	8.386	8.380	8.387
F <sub>2</sub>	7.688	7.700	7.685	7.681	7.666	7.678	7.673	7.677
CO	8.120	8.145	8.122	8.118	8.115	8.116	8.108	8.114
CN	9.687	9.720	9.700	N/A	9.681	9.692	9.686	—
HF	2.203	2.185	2.179	2.178	2.175	2.177	2.175	2.177
H <sub>2</sub> O	3.608	3.584	3.570	3.569	3.567	3.566	3.561	3.569
S <sub>2</sub>	7.166	7.254	7.228	7.215	7.210	7.219	7.207	7.200

the basis set limit as is perhaps desirable (see also Ref. 11).

What is missing from the literature at present is a study where for a number of representative systems convergence for the main post-CCSD correlation contributions to molecular atomization energies is considered as close to the one-particle basis set limit as possible, converged at the level of 0.01 kcal/mol where feasible.

The present paper reports such a study. It will also serve to provide additional theoretical support for the approximations inherent in the *Wn* (Refs. 18–22) and HEAT (Refs. 23 and 24) families of computational thermochemistry protocols. Finally, the present study should also shed some light on the intrinsic limits to accuracy with present-day wave function-based *ab initio* techniques—even if we were to assume, for the sake of argument, that CCSD basis convergence is a solved problem.

## II. COMPUTATIONAL METHODS

Most calculations reported in the present work were carried out on the Linux cluster of the Martin group, which consists of machines custom-built by Access Technologies of Rehovot, Israel. We relied very heavily on four machines in particular. All have 2 bytes of high-bandwidth scratch disk space (eight 250 GB Serial-ATA disks striped eight-way on a hardware RAID controller). Two of the machines have quadruple dual-core AMD Opteron 870 CPUs, the remaining two have dual quad-core Intel Cloverton CPUs at 2.66 GHz. One of these latter machines has 32 GB of random access memory, the remaining three have 16 GB. Some calculations were carried out at the University of Warwick, using Opteron-based systems.

The CCSD(T) calculations with the aug-cc-pV7Z basis set<sup>26,27</sup>—which contains up to *k* functions—were carried out using both PSI 3.3.0 (Ref. 28) at Weizmann, and a locally modified version of DALTON 2.0 (Ref. 29) at Warwick. CCSD(T) calculations in smaller basis sets were carried out using MOLPRO 2006.1 (Ref. 30) for closed-shell cases, and the Austin-Mainz-Budapest version of ACES II (Ref. 31) for open-shell cases. All post-CCSD(T) calculations were carried out using an OpenMP parallel version of Kállay's gen-

eral coupled cluster code MRCC (Ref. 32) interfaced to the Austin-Mainz-Budapest version of the ACES II (Ref. 31) program system.

Unless specifically noted otherwise, unrestricted Hartree-Fock references were used for open-shell systems, and CCSD(T)/cc-pV(Q+d)Z reference geometries were taken from Ref. 18.

All basis sets employed, except for the unpolarized Dunning-Hay double zeta (DZ) basis set<sup>33</sup> employed for some post-CCSDTQ contributions, belong to the correlation consistent family of Dunning and co-workers.<sup>34–37</sup>

The following basis set extrapolations were considered: (a) the simple two-point  $A+B/L^3$  expression of Halkier *et al.*,<sup>7</sup> which is rooted in the partial-wave expansion of singlet-coupled pair energies in heliumlike atoms<sup>4–6</sup> and is used extensively in both the *Wn* (Refs. 18, 19, and 22) and HEAT (Refs. 23 and 24) families of computational thermochemistry protocols; (b) Schwenke's empirical two-point extrapolation formulas,<sup>10</sup> which are equivalent to  $A+B/L^\alpha$  with an empirical extrapolation exponent  $\alpha$ ; (c) three-point linear extrapolation formulas of the type  $A+B/L^3+C/L^4$  and  $A+B/L^3+C/L^5$ , similar to those first proposed in Ref. 9. (We also considered the variable-exponent three-point formula  $A+B/L^C$ , not as an actual extrapolation—as it is not size consistent—but use the “effective decay exponent” obtained as a probe for effective convergence rate, similar to Ref. 25.)

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Quasiperturbative triple excitations, (T)

Extrapolated contributions of “parenthetical” triples to the total atomization energy are given in Table I. In a number of cases, we were able to reach as far as aug-cc-pV7Z basis sets (AV7Z for short).

In the following discussion, the notation AV{L−1,L}Z, for instance, will indicate  $A+B/L^\alpha$  ( $\alpha=3$ ) extrapolation from aug-cc-pV(L−1)Z and aug-cc-pVLZ basis sets, unless specifically indicated otherwise. PV{L−1,L}Z stands for the same extrapolation, but from regular cc-pV(L−1)Z and cc-pVLZ basis sets.

Comparison of AV{5,6}Z and AV{6,7}Z data reveals that, with the exception of singlet C<sub>2</sub> (0.007 kcal/mol), the extrapolated contributions are converged to better than 0.005 kcal/mol.

The extrapolated AV{T,Q}Z data are in surprisingly good agreement with our best limits. [This extrapolation is used for the (T) contribution in W2, W3, and W3.2 theories, as well as in HEAT345.] It is perhaps not coincidental (see below) that Schwenke's extrapolation formula for AV{T,Q}Z basis sets is equivalent to an inverse power extrapolation with exponent  $\alpha=2.998\ 82$ , which is only semantically different from  $\alpha=3$ .

In contrast, the AV{Q,5}Z expression used in W4, W4.2, and W4.3 theories tends to slightly overestimate the basis set limit contribution, by amounts ranging from 0.05 kcal/mol in C<sub>2</sub> via 0.03 kcal/mol in N<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, and CO and 0.02 kcal/mol in O<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>2</sub>O to less than 0.01 kcal/mol in HF. Comparison of AV{Q,5}Z, AV{5,6}Z, and AV{6,7}Z limits suggests that starting with AVQZ basis sets,  $\alpha=3$  extrapolation approaches the basis set limit from above (in absolute value), i.e., that convergence is faster than  $\alpha=3$ . This behavior was previously noted by Feller *et al.*<sup>16</sup> (For the AV{5,6,7}Z basis sets and the atoms {C,N,O,F}, we find effective decay exponents in the 3.57–3.70 range.)

Schwenke's extrapolation for the (T) contribution was derived from fitting to best (T) limits for seven systems: Ne, N<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>O, CO, HF, and F<sub>2</sub>. These were themselves obtained from what he terms *f*-limit basis sets (saturated to 5  $\mu$ hartree in each angular momentum) going all the way up to *i* functions. His AV{Q,5}Z extrapolation is equivalent to  $\alpha=3.601\ 83$ . This definitely remedies the overshooting problem: In systems such as H<sub>2</sub>O and C<sub>2</sub>, SchwenkeAV{Q,5}Z basically gets the basis set limit spot on, while it tends to be slightly low for other systems. SchwenkeAV{5,6}Z is equivalent to  $\alpha=3.227\ 88$ , and agrees with the available AV{6,7}Z limit data to within 0.003 kcal/mol root mean square (rms), compared to 0.009 kcal/mol for SchwenkeAV{Q,5}Z and 0.006 kcal/mol (0.004 excluding S<sub>2</sub>) for the regular AV{5,6}Z extrapolation.

Finally, we considered a three-point linear extrapolation  $A+B/L^3+C/L^4$ . AV{Q,5,6}Z too seems to behave well, albeit with a tendency to slightly undershoot the available AV{6,7}Z limits. AV{5,6,7}Z and AV{6,7}Z agree to within 0.007 kcal/mol rms (0.004 kcal/mol excluding S<sub>2</sub>).

We conclude that the regular  $\alpha=3$  extrapolation is appropriate for AV{T,Q}Z and probably AV{5,6}Z basis set pairs, but that Schwenke's extrapolation (equivalent to  $\alpha=3.601\ 83$ ) is more appropriate for the AV{Q,5}Z pair. For the AV{5,6}Z pair, Schwenke's expression (equivalent here to  $\alpha=3.227\ 88$ ) appears to be as reliable as  $\alpha=3$  or may be slightly more so—the difference is too close to call.

We also would like to stress that Schwenke's exponents are themselves the result of a fit, and that effective exponents for his seven individual species (reverse engineered for the present work) reveal a considerable spread. In our opinion, obtaining the (T) contribution converged to 0.01 kcal/mol using a two-point extrapolation from *spdfgh* and *spdfghi* basis sets appears to be feasible.

TABLE II. Convergence of the contribution of valence higher-order triples, CCSDT-CCSD(T), to the total atomization energy (kcal/mol).

$\hat{T}_3-(T)$	PV{D,T}Z	PV{T,Q}Z	PV{Q,5}Z	PV{5,6}Z	PV{T,Q}Z $\alpha=2.5$
B <sub>2</sub>	0.240	0.113	0.079	0.088	0.080
C <sub>2</sub>	-2.194	-2.248	-2.287	-2.291	-2.292
N <sub>2</sub>	-0.778	-0.756	-0.773	-0.778	-0.779
O <sub>2</sub>	-0.543	-0.497	-0.526	N/A	-0.511
F <sub>2</sub>	-0.358	-0.314	-0.335	-0.339	-0.325
CO	-0.561	-0.567	-0.583	N/A	-0.591
CN	0.846	0.786	0.749	N/A	0.760
NO	-0.355	-0.335	-0.354	N/A	-0.356
HF	-0.136	-0.160	-0.167	-0.165	-0.169
H <sub>2</sub> O	-0.204	-0.233	-0.246	N/A	-0.246
P <sub>2</sub>	-0.997	-0.931	-0.944	N/A	-0.957
S <sub>2</sub>	-0.498	-0.482	-0.484	N/A	-0.504
Cl <sub>2</sub>	-0.412	-0.436	-0.430	N/A	-0.456
CS	-0.635	-0.636	-0.645	N/A	-0.664
SO	-0.459	-0.442	-0.446	N/A	-0.461
CIF	-0.322	-0.314	-0.315	N/A	-0.327

## B. Higher-order connected triple excitations

Extrapolated contributions of higher-order connected triples,  $T_3-(T)$ , to the total atomization energy are given in Table II.

We have PV{5,6}Z data available for a limited number of systems. Comparison with their PV{Q,5}Z counterparts reveals convergence to better than 0.01 kcal/mol, and suggests that the PV{Q,5}Z numbers are very close to the basis set limit.

Even from PV{D,T}Z basis sets (as used in W4 and W4.2 theories), useful estimates can apparently be obtained, with the notable exceptions of B<sub>2</sub> and, to a lesser extent, singlet C<sub>2</sub>.

The PV{T,Q}Z numbers, however, reveal that convergence in this basis set size regime is actually *slower* than  $\alpha=3$ . (The PV{T,Q}Z basis set pair is used for this contribution in the HEAT approach as well as in W4.3 theory.) Fitting against either the PV{Q,5}Z or the available PV{5,6}Z limits suggests an effective  $\alpha=2.5$ . On purely empirical grounds, we recommend this for extrapolation of the  $T_3-(T)$  term from the PV{T,Q}Z basis set pair.

## C. Parenthetical connected quadruple excitations

Raw and extrapolated contributions of parenthetical quadruples to the total atomization energy—as obtained using the CCSDT(Q) method as defined in Ref. 38 and implemented in Ref. 39—are given in Table III.

In highly polar systems such as H<sub>2</sub>O, HF, OH, and BF, the cc-pVDZ basis set appears to overshoot the contribution: Even in such cases, basis set convergence for (Q) is, however, monotonic from cc-pVTZ onwards. In other systems, convergence is monotonic from cc-pVDZ onwards.

Our best available data are PV{Q,5}Z extrapolations. Comparison of PV{T,Q}Z and PV{Q,5}Z data reveals that they agree very well with each other, the largest discrepancies being 0.015 kcal/mol for P<sub>2</sub> and Cl<sub>2</sub>, followed by 0.01 kcal/mol for C<sub>2</sub> and 0.007 kcal/mol for BN. This in

TABLE III. Convergence of the contribution of valence quasiperturbative connected quadruples, CCSDT(Q)-CCSDT, to the total atomization energy (kcal/mol).

	PVDZ	PVTZ	PVQZ	PV5Z	PV{D,T}Z	PV{T,Q}Z	PV{Q,5}Z	ANO431
B <sub>2</sub>	0.908	1.163	1.220	1.239	1.27	1.262	1.260	0.945
C <sub>2</sub> <sup>a</sup>	2.655	3.198	3.311	3.346	3.46	3.393	3.382	2.823
BN <sup>b</sup>	2.478	3.041	3.188	3.238	3.28	3.296	3.289	2.757
N <sub>2</sub>	1.057	1.134	1.217	1.247	1.17	1.278	1.279	1.042
O <sub>2</sub>	1.122	1.093	1.157	1.179	1.08	1.204	1.202	1.040
F <sub>2</sub>	0.929	0.912	0.982	1.006	0.91	1.033	1.032	0.867
CO	0.634	0.652	0.700	0.715	0.66	0.735	0.731	0.582
CN	1.237	1.438	1.519	1.544	1.52	1.578	1.571	1.249
NO	0.878	0.913	0.981	1.004	0.93	1.031	1.027	0.845
HF	0.216	0.119	0.132	0.139	0.08	0.141	0.145	0.132
H <sub>2</sub> O	0.261	0.191	0.213	0.223	0.16	0.229	0.234	0.213
OH	0.114	0.078	0.088	0.093	0.06	0.095	0.099	0.100
BF	0.301	0.264	0.290	0.297	0.25	0.309	0.304	0.254
CS	0.590	0.978	1.082	1.119	1.14	1.158	1.159	0.472
P <sub>2</sub>	1.040	1.431	1.567	1.608	1.60	1.666	1.651	1.071
S <sub>2</sub>	0.499	0.796	0.899	0.939	0.92	0.975	0.980	0.536
Cl <sub>2</sub>	0.262	0.425	0.487	0.515	0.49	0.532	0.545	0.296

<sup>a</sup> $^1\Sigma_g^+$  state at  $r=1.24$  Å.<sup>b</sup> $X^1\Sigma_g^+$  state at CCSDT/cc-pVQZ bond distance, 1.2769 Å, from Ref. 62.

turn suggests that basis set convergence, from cc-pVTZ onwards, is well described by the singlet partial-wave formula  $A+B/L^3$ . In contrast, PV{D,T}Z extrapolations fare poorly (as previously reported<sup>22</sup>), the cc-pVDZ basis set being simply too anemic. The inadequacy of cc-pVDZ is not limited to overshooting in the highly polar systems, but extends to severe undershooting in the second-row molecules.

The  $A+B/L^3$  convergence we observe for the (Q) contribution is not obvious and deserves some attention. Our (perhaps naive) rationalization is based on our analysis of the size of the (Q) contribution in different systems: our results clearly demonstrate that (Q) is largest in systems with strong nondynamical correlation. In fact, the systems we have studied here that fall into this category all have considerable multiconfigurational character and would ideally be described using several reference configurations when trying to recover dynamical correlation. The additional reference configurations would be double excitations from the nominal Hartree-Fock configuration, and describing dynamical correlation would entail double excitations from these additional reference configurations, or quadruple excitations from Hartree-Fock. These systems will thus have large (Q) contributions, but since these are predominantly double excitations from other reference configurations, we can expect the typical basis set convergence for double excitations, that is,  $\propto L^{-3}$ .<sup>40</sup>

As was shown previously,<sup>18</sup> the cc-pVTZ numbers multiplied by an empirical scaling factor of 1.1 (as used in W4 theory<sup>18</sup>) agree quite well with the basis set limit estimates available. Could one come up with a solution that is more reliable than cc-pVDZ yet less costly than scaled cc-pVTZ? It was noted before<sup>22</sup> that a [4s3p1d] Widmark-Malmqvist-Roos<sup>41</sup> atomic natural orbital<sup>42</sup> basis set appears to be devoid of the overshooting problems associated with cc-pVDZ. As this basis set is still considerably smaller than cc-pVTZ, it might offer a cost-effective alternative, at least

for first-row systems. (For second-row systems, ANO431 suffers from the same undershooting defects as cc-pVDZ.)

Finally, we note that brute-force convergence to 0.1 kcal/mol requires at least cc-pVQZ basis sets, and that brute-force convergence to 0.01 kcal/mol will probably require at least a cc-pV6Z basis set.

## D. Higher-order connected quadruple excitations

It was suggested before,<sup>18</sup> based on data up to cc-pVTZ, that higher-order connected quadruple excitations,  $T_4-(Q)$ , converge rapidly with the basis set. In the present work, we were able to go out to cc-pVQZ for a number of species. Results are summarized in Table IV.

It can be seen there that variation between cc-pVQZ, cc-pVTZ, and scaled cc-pVDZ amounts to a few hundredths

TABLE IV. Convergence of the contribution of valence higher-order quadruples, CCSDTQ-CCSDT(Q), to the total atomization energy (kcal/mol).

$\hat{T}_4-(Q)$	PVDZ(no d)	DZ	W4,W4.2 1.1 × PVDZ	W4.3 PVDZ	best PVQZ
B <sub>2</sub>	0.193	0.200	0.093	0.031	0.009
C <sub>2</sub>	-1.297	-1.340	-1.173	-1.102	-1.128
BN <sup>a</sup>	-0.827	-0.828	-1.226	-1.187	-1.214
N <sub>2</sub>	-0.177	-0.191	-0.171	-0.151	-0.166
O <sub>2</sub>	-0.088	-0.056	-0.137	-0.128	-0.146
F <sub>2</sub>	-0.084	-0.058	-0.116	-0.113	N/A
CO	-0.065	-0.044	-0.110	-0.095	-0.098
CN	-0.096	-0.026	-0.416	-0.443	-0.469
HF	-0.013	-0.004	-0.017	-0.016	-0.014
H <sub>2</sub> O	-0.019	-0.011	-0.027	-0.022	-0.022
OH	0.005	0.009	0.000	-0.006	-0.006
P <sub>2</sub>	-0.146	-0.143	-0.118	-0.146	-0.169
S <sub>2</sub>	0.037	0.037	-0.054	-0.060	-0.076
Cl <sub>2</sub>	0.007	0.007	-0.025	-0.020	N/A

<sup>a</sup>At CCSDT/cc-pVQZ bond distance, 1.2769 Å, from Ref. 62.

TABLE V. All of connected quadruples,  $\hat{T}_4$ , considered together; connected quadruples and quintuples,  $\hat{T}_4 + \hat{T}_5$ , considered together (all units kcal/mol).

$\hat{T}_4$ total (Q) $\tilde{T}_4-(Q)$	W4lite, HEAT(Q)	W4, W4.2	W4.3	Better	Best	
	PVDZ null	1.1 × PVTZ 1.1 × PVDZ	PV{T,Q}Z PVTZ	PV{Q,5}Z PVTZ	PV{Q,5}Z PVQZ	
B <sub>2</sub>	0.908	1.372	1.293	1.291	1.269	
C <sub>2</sub>	2.655	2.369	2.346	2.335	2.309	
BN <sup>a</sup>	2.478	2.119	2.109	2.102	2.075	
N <sub>2</sub>	1.028	1.027	1.056	1.049	1.034	
O <sub>2</sub>	1.122	1.066	1.076	1.074	1.056	
F <sub>2</sub>	0.929	0.887	0.920	0.920	N/A	
CO	0.634	0.608	0.641	0.636	0.633	
CN	1.237	1.166	1.135	1.129	1.103	
HF	0.190	0.104	0.112	0.115	0.117	
H <sub>2</sub> O	0.261	0.184	0.206	0.212	0.191	
P <sub>2</sub>	1.040	1.456	1.520	1.505	1.482	
S <sub>2</sub>	0.499	0.822	0.915	0.920	0.904	
Cl <sub>2</sub>	0.262	0.443	0.512	0.525	N/A	
$\hat{T}_4 + \hat{T}_5$ (Q) $\tilde{T}_4-(Q)$ $\tilde{T}_5$	W4lite, HEAT(Q)	W4, W4.2	W4.3	Better	Best	
	PVDZ null null	ANO431 null null	1.1 × PVTZ 1.1 × PVDZ DZ	PV{T,Q}Z PVTZ PVDZ	PV{Q,5}Z PVTZ PVDZ	PV{Q,5}Z PVQZ PVTZ
B <sub>2</sub>	0.908	0.95	1.456	1.368	1.366	1.335
C <sub>2</sub>	2.655	2.82	2.643	2.666	2.655	2.647
BN <sup>a</sup>	2.478	2.76	2.297	2.263	2.256	2.256
N <sub>2</sub>	1.028	1.04	1.135	1.170	1.163	1.143
O <sub>2</sub>	1.122	1.04	1.142	1.179	1.177	
F <sub>2</sub>	0.929	0.87	0.919	0.960	0.960	
CO	0.634	0.58	0.654	0.673	0.668	
CN	1.237	1.29	1.293	1.253	1.247	
HF	0.190	0.13	0.114	0.114	0.117	0.123
H <sub>2</sub> O	0.261	0.21	0.190	0.214	0.220	
P <sub>2</sub>	1.040	1.07	1.555	1.646	1.631	
S <sub>2</sub>	0.499	0.54	0.853	0.972	0.977	
Cl <sub>2</sub>	0.262	0.30	0.446	0.531	0.544	

<sup>a</sup>At CCSDT/cc-pVQZ bond distance, 1.2769 Å, from Ref. 62.

of a kcal/mol at most, even for such pathologically multireference systems as singlet C<sub>2</sub> (Ref. 43) and singlet BN.<sup>44</sup> No clear way of extrapolating or correcting these data can be seen, and it should be noted that even the O<sub>2</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> CCSDTQ/cc-pVQZ calculations strained our available computational resources to the very limit.

The  $T_4-(Q)$  contribution uniformly reduces the atomization energy, and its absolute magnitude is roughly proportional to the degree of nondynamical correlation, varying from essentially nil in cases such as HF and H<sub>2</sub>O via about 0.1 kcal/mol for systems such as CO, O<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, and P<sub>2</sub> to over 1 kcal/mol for the singlet states of C<sub>2</sub> and BN. One would expect a contribution that primarily expresses nondynamical correlation effects to exhibit weak basis set dependence—as we indeed observe.

We considered still further reduction of the basis set to a simple unpolarized DZ set. Performance then becomes very uneven, however, and the same holds for the cc-pVDZ basis set with the polarization functions removed.

## E. Connected quadruples considered as a whole

Let us now consider all of  $T_4$  together. Results are summarized in the upper panel of Table V.

It can be seen here that achieving convergence to within a few hundredths of a kcal/mol is quite feasible, but that anything beyond that will be a very arduous task.

The W4.3 combo—PV{T,Q}Z for (Q), PVTZ for  $T_4-(Q)$ —is generally within 0.01–0.03 kcal/mol of the best achievable basis set limits. It tends to slightly underestimate in cases such as HF and H<sub>2</sub>O, but slightly overestimate otherwise (particularly for strongly multireference cases such as B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>, and BN).

The W4 combo<sup>18</sup>—PVTZ for (Q), PVDZ for  $T_4-(Q)$ , both scaled by 1.1—overall sacrifices fairly little accuracy for drastic cost savings. The most problematic first-row system appears to be B<sub>2</sub>, for which an overestimate by 0.08 kcal/mol is seen. Our limited second-row data include some significant differences (0.07 kcal/mol for P<sub>2</sub>, 0.10 kcal/mol for S<sub>2</sub>, and 0.08 kcal/mol for Cl<sub>2</sub>), and illus-

TABLE VI. Convergence of the contribution of valence connected quintuples ( $T_5$ ) to the total atomization energy (kcal/mol), using various approximations.

	CCSDTQ(5) <sub>A</sub> -CCSDTQ			CCSDTQ(5)-CCSDTQ			$\hat{T}_5$ -(5) <sub>A</sub>			$\hat{T}_5$ -(5)			$\hat{T}_5$ total			
	DZ	PVDZ	PVTZ	DZ	PVDZ	PVTZ	DZ	PVDZ	PVTZ	DZ	PVDZ	PVTZ	DZ	PVDZ (no d)	PVDZ	PVTZ
B <sub>2</sub>	0.057	0.055	0.065	0.068	0.049	0.040	0.027	0.020	0.022	0.015	0.026	0.048	0.084	0.078	0.075	0.066
C <sub>2</sub>	0.304	0.338	0.350	0.470	0.465	0.399	-0.031	-0.018	-0.012	-0.196	-0.146	-0.061	0.274	0.236	0.320	0.338
BN <sup>a</sup>	0.214	0.191	0.231	0.100	-0.127	-0.174	-0.035	-0.037	-0.040	0.078	0.280	0.355	0.178	0.177	0.154	0.181
N <sub>2</sub>	0.105	0.113	0.110	0.117	0.125	0.106	0.003	0.001	-0.002	-0.009	-0.011	0.003	0.108	0.113	0.114	0.109
O <sub>2</sub>	0.066	0.097		0.075	0.108	0.116	0.010	0.006		0.001	-0.005		0.076	0.092	0.103	
F <sub>2</sub>	0.032	0.039		0.038	0.044	0.074	0.000	0.001		-0.006	-0.004		0.032	0.025	0.040	
CO	0.058	0.040		0.059	0.019	-0.006	-0.013	-0.008		-0.014	0.013		0.046	0.034	0.032	
CN	0.110	0.118		0.156	0.144	0.111	0.017	0.000		-0.029	-0.026		0.127	0.130	0.118	
HF	0.010	0.003	0.007	0.011	0.002	0.005	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.010	0.001	0.002	0.006
H <sub>2</sub> O	0.006	0.005		0.007	0.008	0.009	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.006	0.004	0.008	
P <sub>2</sub>	0.093	0.119		0.103	0.104		0.006	0.007		-0.004	0.022		0.099	0.100	0.126	
S <sub>2</sub>	0.026	0.054		0.025	0.050		0.005	0.003		+0.006	0.007		0.031	0.031	0.057	
Cl <sub>2</sub>	0.003	0.019		0.003	0.017		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.002		0.003	0.003	0.019	

<sup>a</sup>At CCSDT/cc-pVQZ bond distance, 1.2769 Å, from Ref. 62.

trate why it is desirable, where feasible, to “walk the extra mile” for W4.3 calculations on second-row systems.

In HEAT345(Q) (Ref. 24) and W4lite,<sup>18</sup> higher-order quadruples are neglected entirely, and parenthetical quadruples approximated by a simple CCSDT(Q)/cc-pVDZ calculation. This works better than it has any right to, in fact, but significant errors arise for highly multireference systems as well as those for which the bonding is highly polar, and for second-row compounds. The latter two issues reflect the limitations of the cc-pVDZ basis set. As for the former issue, Stanton and co-workers have argued<sup>24,38,45</sup> that the CCSDT(Q) method should, in fact, benefit from an error cancellation between higher-order quadruples contributions and the complete neglect of quintuple excitations. This comparison has been made in the lower panel of Table V. We see there that this error cancellation holds rather well in some cases like C<sub>2</sub>, but much less so in cases like B<sub>2</sub>. Substituting the ANO431 basis set improves agreement for the highly polar systems. It has been shown elsewhere<sup>46</sup> that the HEAT345(Q)/W4lite-type approximation can also lead to very significant errors (up to 0.5 kcal/mol for CS) in second-row systems, and we found here that substituting ANO431 affords no succor for those either. Quite simply put, cc-pVDZ is too limited a basis set to universally and reliably capture quadruple excitation effects.

## F. Connected quintuples

The limiting basis set dependence of CCSDTQ5 calculations is  $O(n^5N^7)$  (where  $n$  is the number of electrons and  $N$  the number of basis functions), and therefore extended basis set CCSDTQ5 calculations quickly become intractable. Fortunately, as seen in Table VI, such effects converge very rapidly with the basis set—even a simple, unpolarized, DZ basis set captures the effect to within a few hundredths of a kcal/mol in all cases. (This again makes sense if the  $T_5$  effects are primarily seen as an expression of nondynamical correlation. Results with the cc-pVDZ basis set with polarization functions removed are nearly identical—as noted

previously<sup>18</sup>—and afford some additional cost savings, especially in second-row compounds.)

In only five cases were we able to go out to cc-pVTZ—HF, B<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>2</sub> ( $X^1\Sigma^+$ ), BN ( $a^1\Sigma^+$ ), and N<sub>2</sub>—and in this latter case, the calculation was only barely feasible on the available hardware. For BN and C<sub>2</sub>, the PVDZ-PVTZ differences are 0.03 and 0.02 kcal/mol, respectively; for the remaining systems they are 0.01 kcal/mol or less.

Predictably, the only systems for which one finds chemically significant connected quintuples contributions are those with appreciable nondynamical correlation.

In contrast to the case of  $T_4$ —where CCSDT(Q) is exceedingly useful—parenthetical quintuples, CCSDTQ(5),<sup>39</sup> are of very limited utility. They may severely overestimate the effects of  $T_5$  in cases with substantial nondynamical correlation, and the CCSDTQ5-CCSDTQ(5) difference still exhibits appreciable basis set dependence in cases like C<sub>2</sub>. While additivity approximations such as  $[\text{CCSDTQ}(5)\text{-CCSDTQ}]/\text{PVDZ} + [\text{CCSDTQ}(5)\text{-CCSDTQ}(5)]/\text{DZ}$  appear to work reasonably well in other cases, their reliability is far from assured.

The CCSDTQ(5)<sub>A</sub> method,<sup>39</sup> on the other hand, seems to do a much better job, and is a realistic option in cases where full CCSDTQ5 calculations would entail unrealistic CPU time and/or memory requirements. In a recent W4 study on a number of perfluoro and perchloro compounds,<sup>46</sup> CCSDTQ(5)<sub>A</sub>/DZ was employed for the  $T_5$  term in BF<sub>3</sub>, as a full CCSDTQ5 calculation would have required iteratively solving for about five billion amplitudes.

Can the calculation of connected quintuples be avoided entirely? Feller and Peterson<sup>11</sup> suggested estimating the contributions beyond CCSDTQ by means of Goodson’s continued fraction expression.<sup>47</sup> We attempted both this and a simple geometric extrapolation,  $E_{\text{FCI}} - E_{\text{CCSDTQ}} \approx -\Delta E_Q^2 / (\Delta E_Q - \Delta E_T)$ , where  $E_{\text{FCI}}$  denotes the full CI energy. Both expressions have similar (limited) predictive power: sometimes (e.g., C<sub>2</sub>) they predict  $T_5$  contributions surpris-

TABLE VII. Convergence of the differential contribution of quasiperturbative connected triple excitations, CCSD(T)-CCSD, to the core-valence component of the total atomization energy (kcal/mol).

	aug-pCVDZ	aug-pCVTZ	aug-pCVQZ	aug-pCV5Z	aug-pCV6Z	{T,Q}	{Q,5}	{5,6}	SchwenkeTQ	SchwenkeQ5	Schwenke56
B <sub>2</sub>	0.114	0.241	0.268	0.275	0.275	0.287	0.283	0.275	0.287	0.281	0.275
C <sub>2</sub>	0.347	0.642	0.698	0.712	0.712	0.738	0.728	0.712	0.738	0.724	0.712
N <sub>2</sub>	0.139	0.284	0.316	0.325	0.326	0.339	0.334	0.328	0.339	0.332	0.328
O <sub>2</sub>	0.091	0.185	0.206	0.212	0.213	0.222	0.218	0.215	0.222	0.217	0.215
F <sub>2</sub>	0.125	0.228	0.249	0.255	0.256	0.264	0.260	0.257	0.264	0.259	0.257
CO	0.070	0.166	0.190	0.196	0.198	0.207	0.203	0.199	0.207	0.202	0.199
CN	0.133	0.280	0.311	0.319	0.321	0.333	0.328	0.323	0.333	0.326	0.322
NO	0.116	0.235	0.261	0.269	0.270	0.280	0.276	0.272	0.280	0.274	0.272
HF	0.015	0.036	0.040	0.041	0.041	0.043	0.042	0.041	0.043	0.041	0.041
H <sub>2</sub> O	0.028	0.059	0.066	0.067	0.068	0.071	0.069	0.068	0.071	0.069	0.068
BH	0.032	0.053	0.058	0.060	0.060	0.062	0.061	0.060	0.062	0.061	0.060
CH	0.027	0.047	0.051	0.052	0.052	0.054	0.053	0.052	0.054	0.053	0.052
OH	0.019	0.039	0.043	0.044	0.044	0.046	0.045	0.045	0.046	0.045	0.044
BF	0.016	0.049	0.059	0.062	0.063	0.067	0.066	0.065	0.067	0.065	0.064
P <sub>2</sub>	0.648	0.864	0.932	0.953	N/A	0.982	0.976	N/A	0.982	0.971	N/A
S <sub>2</sub>	0.320	0.428	0.465	0.477	N/A	0.492	0.490	N/A	0.492	0.487	N/A
Cl <sub>2</sub>	0.264	0.363	0.390	0.399	N/A	0.409	0.408	N/A	0.409	0.406	N/A

ingly well, sometimes (e.g., F<sub>2</sub>) they overestimate them by half an order of magnitude. We also considered both expressions for the contribution of connected *sextuple* excitations,  $T_6$ , and there we found both expressions to be of similar quality as explicit CCSDTQ5(6)/DZ or CCSDTQ56/DZ calculations.

### G. Parenthetical triples in core-valence correlation

The contribution of parenthetical triples to the core-valence correlation energy may be small in absolute terms, but it is chemically quite significant in relative terms (molecule versus separate atoms)—and indeed, it has been shown in the past<sup>19</sup> that as much as half of the core-valence contribution in total atomization energies can derive from parenthetical triples.

Basis set convergence for this contribution is summarized in Table VII. As can be seen there, this contribution is nearly saturated at the ACV{T,Q}Z level (as used in the W4 family), and the distance from the basis set limit is on the order of 0.01 kcal/mol or less.

### H. Higher-order correlation effects in core-valence correlation

In W4.2 and W4.3 theories, a correction for higher-order triples in the core-valence contribution is obtained at the CCSDT/cc-pwCVTZ level. In Table VIII, we consider both further basis set expansion for this contribution and the effect of connected quadruples.

First, we compare the core-valence CCSDT-CCSD(T) difference between CV{T,Q}Z and unextrapolated CVTZ. Differences range from essentially nil for systems dominated by dynamical correlation to as much as 0.1 kcal/mol for pathologically multireference systems such as C<sub>2</sub> and BN. The contributions almost universally *increase* the total atomization energy, and tend to roughly cancel with the negative post-W4.3 correlation contributions in the *valence* component.

TABLE VIII. Higher-order core-core and core-valence corrections (kcal/mol).

	$\hat{T}_3\text{-}(T)$ $\Delta\text{CV}\{T,Q\}Z^a$	$\Delta(Q)$ CVTZ <sup>b</sup>
B <sub>2</sub>	0.035	0.072
C <sub>2</sub>	0.096	0.082
N <sub>2</sub>	0.021	0.013
O <sub>2</sub>	0.014	0.008
F <sub>2</sub>	0.012	0.007
CO	0.020	0.018
CN	0.026	0.033
NO	0.017	0.017
HF	-0.001	0.005
H <sub>2</sub> O	0.002	0.005
CH	0.006	0.000
OH	0.001	0.003
CH <sub>3</sub>	N/A	-0.003
CH <sub>4</sub>	N/A	-0.004
C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>2</sub>	0.022	0.009
C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	N/A	0.003
NH <sub>3</sub>	N/A	0.002
H <sub>2</sub> CO	N/A	0.012
BN	0.088	0.116
HNO	N/A	0.015
PH <sub>3</sub>	N/A	-0.017
Cl <sub>2</sub>	N/A	0.039
ClF	N/A	0.018
HCl	N/A	0.004
S <sub>2</sub>	N/A	0.071
CS	N/A	0.084
HS	N/A	-0.001
H <sub>2</sub> S	N/A	-0.001
SO	N/A	0.025

<sup>a</sup>ROHF reference. Values with UHF reference are very similar.

<sup>b</sup>UHF reference.

TABLE IX. Comparison of W4.4 with other W4 variants and ATcT data for total atomization energies (kcal/mol).

	W4lite Ref. 18	W4 Ref. 18	W4.2 Ref. 18	W4.3 Ref. 18	$\Delta$ [DBOC] Ref. 18	CV(Q)	W4.4 <sup>a</sup>	W4.4 <sup>b</sup>	ATcT	Uncert.
						Present work			Ref. 18	
H <sub>2</sub>	103.30	103.30	103.30	103.30	-0.04	0.000	103.26	103.26	103.27	0.00
OH	101.84	101.82	101.81	101.80	-0.02	0.003	101.77	101.76	101.76	0.03
H <sub>2</sub> O	219.46	219.39	219.38	219.38	-0.03	0.005	219.33	219.32	219.36	0.01
C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>2</sub>	388.57	388.72	388.72	388.79	-0.03	0.009	388.73	388.70	388.62	0.07
CH <sub>4</sub>	392.52	392.52	392.52	392.53	-0.04	-0.004	392.47	392.45	392.50	0.03
CH	80.01	80.02	80.02	80.03	-0.02	0.000	80.00	79.99	79.98	0.05
CO	256.17	256.19	256.18	256.21	-0.01	0.018	256.17	256.15	256.25	0.03
F <sub>2</sub>	36.85	36.84	36.87	36.97	0.00	0.007	36.95	36.94	36.91	0.07
HF	135.40	135.33	135.32	135.30	-0.02	0.005	135.27	135.27	135.27	0.00
N <sub>2</sub>	224.90	225.01	225.00	225.07	-0.01	0.013	225.02	224.99	224.94	0.01
NH <sub>3</sub>	276.62	276.60	276.59	276.61	-0.04	0.002	276.55	276.53	276.59	0.01
NO	149.74	149.81	149.81	149.86	-0.01	0.017	149.83	149.80	149.82	0.02
O <sub>2</sub>	117.77	117.88	117.89	118.01	0.00	0.008	117.98	117.95	117.99	0.00
Cl <sub>2</sub>	56.85	57.03	57.01	57.08	0.00	0.039	57.08	57.07	57.18	0.00
HCl	102.20	102.23	102.22	102.23	-0.01	0.004	102.21	102.20	102.21	0.00
H <sub>2</sub> S	173.54	173.60	173.60	173.64	-0.02	-0.001	173.59	173.59	173.55	0.07
SO	123.52	123.66	123.69	123.75	-0.01	0.025	123.72	123.70	123.72	0.02
C <sub>2</sub>	143.88 <sup>c</sup>	143.86 <sup>c</sup>	144.03 <sup>c</sup>	144.08 <sup>c</sup>	0.00 <sup>c</sup>	0.082	144.08	144.07	144.03 <sup>d</sup>	0.13

<sup>a</sup>Using the usual partial-wave extrapolations for CCSD(5,6) and (T)(5,6).

<sup>b</sup>Using Schwenke's extrapolations for CCSD(5,6) and (T)(Q,5). Using (T)/(5,6) instead leaves results unchanged to two decimal places, except for CH<sub>4</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, and O<sub>2</sub> (+0.01 kcal/mol each) and H<sub>2</sub>S and C<sub>2</sub> (-0.01 kcal/mol each).

<sup>c</sup>Present work.

<sup>d</sup>B. Ruscic, personal communication quoted in Ref. 11. When using CCSD(T)/cc-pwCVQZ reference geometries (all electrons correlated except the 1s deep-core orbitals on second-row atoms), dissociation energies at all levels are found to go up by 0.03 kcal/mol for Cl<sub>2</sub> and SO, by 0.02 kcal/mol for C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub>, CO, and N<sub>2</sub>, by 0.01 kcal/mol for five additional molecules (namely, CH<sub>4</sub>, NH<sub>3</sub>, NO, O<sub>2</sub>, and ClF).

Secondly, we consider connected quadruples, even if only at the CCSDT(Q)/CVTZ level. This contribution becomes significant for two categories of molecules: (a) pathologically multireference systems such as B<sub>2</sub> (0.07 kcal/mol), BN (0.12 kcal/mol), and C<sub>2</sub> (0.08 kcal/mol); (b) some second-row molecules such as Cl<sub>2</sub> (0.04 kcal/mol), S<sub>2</sub>, and CS (0.08 kcal/mol each). This contribution, too, almost universally increases molecular binding (PH<sub>3</sub> being the only real exception).

### I. General observations and W4.4 theory

In the preceding discussions we have focused in detail on the many individual contributions. We now step back and take a broader view.

First, many of the post-W4.3 correlation contributions are in the 0.1 kJ/mol (0.024 kcal/mol) or above range, and their explicit calculation is simply too arduous a task because of the fierce CPU time scalings involved. As such, the prospects for "brute force" calculation of atomization energies to 10 cm<sup>-1</sup> seem quite bleak—even discounting such issues as small errors in the zero-point vibrational energy (see, e.g., Ref. 48 for an illustration), higher-order Born-Oppenheimer corrections, and higher-order relativistic corrections.

Second, and fortunately, a fair degree of mutual cancellation exists between the valence correlation improvements on one hand and inner-shell higher-order triples on the other.

This being said, we here incorporate some of our findings in a new post-W4 method, to be known by the name W4.4 theory. Relative to W4.3 theory defined and discussed in Ref. 18, the changes are the following:

- Either [variant (a)] the valence (T) contribution is extrapolated from AV{5,6}Z basis sets, or [variant (b)] Schwenke's extrapolation formulas are used for both the singlet and triplet coupled CCSD pairs (effective exponents for AV{5,6}Z basis sets:  $\alpha_S=3.069\ 67$  and  $\alpha_T=4.625\ 28$ ) as well as for the valence (T) contribution, with AV{Q,5}Z basis sets (effective exponent 3.601 83, see above).
- The  $T_3-(T)$  term is extrapolated using  $A+B/L^{2.5}$ , following our observations above.
- A connected quadruples core-valence term is computed at the CCSDT(Q)/cc-pwCVTZ level.
- As it was found to be significant in Ref. 48 for systems with many hydrogen atoms, we add a correlation contribution to the diagonal Born-Oppenheimer correction.<sup>49,50</sup> We compute this at the CISD/cc-pVDZ level, which was shown in Ref. 48 to be sufficient for the differential correlation contribution.

Results are compared with earlier W4 variants and the best available ATcT (active thermochemical tables<sup>51-53</sup>) values in Table IX. The ATcT values themselves were previously published in Ref. 18.

On average, improvements compared to W4.3 are modest. In many cases, both methods have small errors on opposite sides, with W4.3 being slightly higher than the ATcT reference value and W4.4 slightly lower. W4.3 did, however, exhibit large discrepancies of obscure origin from ATcT for a few systems, such as C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub> (+0.17 kcal/mol),



$\text{N}_2$  (+0.13 kcal/mol), and  $\text{Cl}_2$  (-0.10 kcal/mol). In W4.4 theory, the discrepancies for  $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2$  and  $\text{N}_2$  are cut by more than half, while  $\text{Cl}_2$  stays in place thanks to a compensation between improving the valence triples (which decreases the binding energy, and this increases the discrepancy with experiment) and the inclusion of core-valence quadruples (which significantly increases the binding energy in this molecule with so many subvalence electrons). For the systems given in Table IX, the rms deviation from the ATcT values drops from 0.08 kcal/mol for W4 via 0.07 kcal/mol for W4.3 to 0.05 kcal/mol for W4.4 (both variants). The latter number implies a 95% confidence interval of just 0.1 kcal/mol.

There is very little to choose between the two W4.4 variants. The extra cost of the CCSD(T)/AV6Z calculation in variant (a) could be an argument in favor of variant (b), but especially for second-row systems, the extra cost will be dwarfed by that of the core-valence (Q) calculation. Over the systems surveyed, variant (a) has a slightly larger maximum positive error than (b) (for  $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2$ ), but a slightly smaller maximum negative error (for  $\text{Cl}_2$ ).

The size of the differences being considered here begs the question whether errors caused by imperfections in the reference geometry could not be of a similar magnitude. W4 theory specifies a CCSD(T)/cc-pV(Q+d)Z reference geometry, which should be well enough converged for the valence correlation contribution to the geometry. However, it has been known for some time<sup>37,54–56</sup> that inner-shell correlation makes contributions to typical bond distances on the order of several milliangstroms, and that all-electron CCSD(T) with the core-valence weighted cc-pwCVQZ basis set<sup>37</sup> (or the older Martin-Taylor core correlation basis set<sup>54</sup>) typically yields bond distances within about a milliangstrom of experiment. We have recalculated the total atomization energies for the molecules in Table IX from CCSD(T)/cc-pwCVQZ reference geometries. Essentially all of the change is confined to the valence and inner-shell CCSD(T) components: The higher-order correlation terms are barely affected. The dissociation energies for  $\text{Cl}_2$  and SO are found to go up by 0.03 kcal/mol, those of  $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2$ , CO, and  $\text{N}_2$  by 0.02 kcal/mol, and the remaining ones by 0.01 kcal/mol or less. For some additional species, we found  $\text{CO}_2$  0.03 kcal/mol, CS and  $\text{S}_2$  0.04 kcal/mol, and  $\text{P}_2$  0.05 kcal/mol. The rms deviation for the W4.4b data at the CCSD(T)/cc-pwCVQZ reference geometries is indeed slightly reduced, but the difference is not very significant statistically over this rather small sample. (We note that the mean signed error changes from -0.012 to +0.003 kcal/mol, i.e., to basically zero.) The results suggest that, especially for second-row molecules or systems with several multiple bonds, the use of CCSD(T)/cc-pwCVQZ reference geometries may eliminate one potential source of small errors. For instance, in a recent benchmark study on  $\text{P}_4$ ,<sup>57</sup> we found that the use of a core-valence correlated reference geometry increases  $\text{TAE}_0$  by 0.13 kcal/mol.

Another possible contribution that bears examining at this level of accuracy is second-order spin-orbit coupling. For the heaviest system in our set ( $\text{Cl}_2$ ) this was calculated using a multiconfigurational linear response treatment<sup>58</sup> as

implemented in DALTON (Ref. 29) and found to influence the atomization energy by considerably less than 0.01 kcal/mol.

An independent check is afforded by considering the scaling with the atomic number  $Z$  of the second-order spin-orbit contribution. For the rare-gas dimers  $\text{Xe}_2$  and  $\text{Rn}_2$ , Runeberg and Pyykkö<sup>59</sup> calculated second-order spin-orbit contributions to  $D_0$  of +0.7 and +4.5 meV, respectively, while Feller *et al.*<sup>60</sup> reported contributions of +0.4 and +2.0 kcal/mol, respectively, for  $\text{Br}_2$  and  $\text{I}_2$ , and of +0.1 and +0.5 kcal/mol, respectively, for HBr and HI. These observations suggest approximate  $\propto Z^4$  scaling, which in turn suggests a second-order spin-orbit contribution to  $D_0(\text{Cl}_2)$  of +0.02 kcal/mol. Its inclusion would actually improve agreement with experiment slightly for this system.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVE

Basis set convergence of post-CCSD correlation effects has been studied near the one-particle basis set limit. Quasiperturbative connected triple excitations, (T), converge more rapidly than  $L^{-3}$ , while higher-order connected triples,  $T_3-(T)$ , converge more slowly—empirically,  $\propto L^{-5/2}$ . Quasiperturbative connected quadruple excitations, (Q), converge smoothly as  $\propto L^{-3}$  starting with the cc-pVTZ basis set, while cc-pVDZ causes overshooting in highly polar first-row systems, and undershooting in second-row compounds. Higher-order connected quadruples display only weak, but somewhat erratic, basis set dependence. Connected quintuple excitations converge very rapidly with the basis set, to the point where even an unpolarized double-zeta basis set yields useful numbers. In cases where fully iterative CCSDTQ5 calculations are not an option, CCSDTQ(5)<sub>Λ</sub> represents a viable alternative, while CCSDTQ(5) cannot be relied upon in the presence of significant nondynamical correlation. Connected quadruples corrections to the core-valence contribution are thermochemically significant in some systems. We propose an additional W4 variant, named W4.4 theory, which is shown to yield a rms deviation from experiment (active thermochemical tables, ATcT) of only 0.05 kcal/mol for systems for which ATcT values are available.

Finally, is it possible to use current technology, brute force, to calculate molecular atomization energies at the 10  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  level? Our findings suggest that the only realistic answer to this question is “no.” However, the more modest goal of “ $3\sigma \leq 1$  kJ/mol” seems to be not only realistic, but eminently achievable with methods of the W4 family.

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