

ENTROPY OF AN IDEAL GAS - SACKUR-TETRODE EQUATION

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Post date: 12 July 2021.

The entropy of a substance is given as

$$S = k \ln \Omega \quad (1)$$

where Ω is the number of microstates accessible to the substance.

For a 3-d ideal gas, this is given by Schroeder's equation 2.40:

$$\Omega \approx \frac{V^N (2\pi mU)^{3N/2}}{h^{3N} N! (3N/2)!} \quad (2)$$

where V is the volume, U is the energy, N is the number of molecules, m is the mass of a single molecule and h is Planck's constant. We can further approximate this formula by using Stirling's approximation for the factorials:

$$N! \approx \sqrt{2\pi N} N^N e^{-N} \quad (3)$$

$$(3N/2)! \approx \sqrt{3\pi N} \left(\frac{3N}{2}\right)^{3N/2} e^{-3N/2} \quad (4)$$

We get

$$\Omega \approx \frac{V^N (\pi mU)^{3N/2}}{h^{3N}} \frac{2^{3N} e^{5N/2}}{\sqrt{6} 3^{3N/2} \pi N^{5N/2+1}} \quad (5)$$

When N is large, we can throw away a couple of factors and take the logarithm:

$$\Omega \approx \frac{V^N (\pi m U)^{3N/2}}{h^{3N}} \frac{2^{3N} e^{5N/2}}{3^{3N/2} N^{5N/2}} \quad (6)$$

$$\ln \Omega = N \ln \left(V \left(\frac{\pi m U}{3} \right)^{3/2} \left(\frac{2}{h} \right)^3 \frac{1}{N^{5/2}} \right) + \frac{5N}{2} \quad (7)$$

$$= N \left[\ln \left(\frac{V}{N} \left(\frac{4\pi m U}{3N h^2} \right)^{3/2} \right) + \frac{5}{2} \right] \quad (8)$$

This gives the entropy of an ideal gas as

$$S = Nk \left[\ln \left(\frac{V}{N} \left(\frac{4\pi m U}{3N h^2} \right)^{3/2} \right) + \frac{5}{2} \right] \quad (9)$$

which is known as the *Sackur-Tetrode equation*.

Example 1. A variant of this equation can be derived in a similar way for the 2-d ideal gas considered earlier. In that case we had

$$\Omega \approx \frac{(\pi A)^N}{(N!)^2 h^{2N}} (\sqrt{2mU})^{2N} \quad (10)$$

where A is the area of the gas. Using Stirling's approximation as before, we get

$$\Omega \approx \frac{(\pi A)^N}{2\pi N^{2N+1} e^{-2N} h^{2N}} (\sqrt{2mU})^{2N} \quad (11)$$

$$\approx \frac{(\pi A)^N}{N^{2N} e^{-2N} h^{2N}} (2mU)^N \quad (12)$$

$$S = k \ln \Omega = Nk \left[\ln \frac{2\pi m A U}{(hN)^2} + 2 \right] \quad (13)$$

Example 2. Schroeder gives the entropy of a mole of helium at room temperature and atmospheric pressure as $S = 126 \text{ J K}^{-1}$. For another monatomic gas such as argon, we can work out the same thing. From the ideal gas law, at a pressure of $1.01 \times 10^5 \text{ N m}^{-2}$ and temperature of 300 K, one mole occupies a volume of

$$V = \frac{nRT}{P} = \frac{(1)(8.31)(300)}{1.01 \times 10^5} = 0.025 \text{ m}^3 \quad (14)$$

The internal energy of a monatomic gas is $\frac{1}{2}kT$ per molecule per degree of freedom, so for one mole we have

$$U = \frac{3}{2}NkT = \frac{3}{2}nRT = 3739 \text{ J} \quad (15)$$

The mass of a mole of argon is 39.948×10^{-3} kg, so with $N = 6.02 \times 10^{23}$ we have

$$m = \frac{39.948 \times 10^{-3}}{6.02 \times 10^{23}} = 6.64 \times 10^{-26} \text{ kg} \quad (16)$$

Plugging these values into 9, the entropy comes out to

$$S = (6.02 \times 10^{23}) (1.38 \times 10^{-23}) (\ln 1.02 \times 10^7 + 2.5) \quad (17)$$

$$= 155 \text{ J K}^{-1} \quad (18)$$

This is a bit higher than the value for helium because of argon's higher mass.

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