We begin by tracing the personal and scholarly history of William of Ockham, the man whose name Ockham's Razor bears. His various formulations of the principle of parsimony are presented. We then define a reaction mechanism and tell a personal story of how Ockham's Razor entered the study of one such mechanism. A small history of methodologies related to Ockham's Razor, least action and least motion, follows. This is all done in the context of the chemical (and scientific) community's almost unthinking acceptance of the principle as heuristically valuable. Which is not matched, to put it mildly, by current philosophical attitudes toward Ockham's Razor. What ensues is a dialogue, pro and con. We first present a context for questioning, within chemistry, the fundamental assumption that underlies Ockham's Razor, namely that the world is simple. Then we argue that in more than one pragmatic way the Razor pr…
Ockham's razor and chemistry. R. Hoffmann, V. I. Minkin, B. K. Carpenter, Bull. Soc. Chim. Fr., 1996, 133, 117. Key Words: OCKHAM'S RAZOR/PHILOSOPHY OF CHEMISTRY/REACTION MECHANISM/PERICYCLIC-REACTIONS/CARBON RINGS/FULLERENES/PHASE. Generation of Carbenes by Thermal Cycloelimination. R. W. Hoffmann, Angew. Ockham's Razor and chemistry. R. Hoffmann, V. I. Minkin, B. K. Carpenter, Bull. Soc. Chim. Fr., 1996, 133, 117. Key Words: OCKHAM'S RAZOR/PHILOSOPHY OF CHEMISTRY/REACTION MECHANISM/PERICYCLIC-REACTIONS/CARBON RINGS/FULLERENES/PHASE. Generation of Carbenes by Thermal Cycloelimination. R. W. Hoffmann, Angew. Ockham's razor (sometimes spelled Ockham's razor) is a principle attributed to the 14th-century English logician and Franciscan friar William of Ockham. The principle states that the explanation of any phenomenon should make as few assumptions as possible, eliminating, or "shaving off," those that make no difference in the observable predictions of the explanatory hypothesis or theory. History Edit. William Ockham (c. 1285â€“1349) is remembered as an influential nominalist, but his popular fame as a great logician rests chiefly on the maxim known as Ockham's razor Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem or "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily." The term razor refers to the act of shaving away unnecessary assumptions to get to the simplest explanation.