

THE MECHANICS OF BINARY INTERACTIONS

Our system comprises an infinite number of mechanically identical, spherical particles known as monomers. These particles have masses m_1 and radii R_1 . When two monomers collide, they lose a certain amount of impact energy and rebound with a coefficient of restitution ε . If the impact energy is below a specific threshold value $E_{\text{imp}} \leq E_{\text{agg}}$, the monomers stick together due to surface forces like van der Waals forces, forming a larger aggregate particle with mass m_2 and radius R_2 . This process is known as *aggregation* and allows the creation of larger particles from individual monomers. A particle of mass m_k is an aggregate of k monomers, hence $m_k = k \cdot m_1$. We assume that the aggregates remain spherically shaped, and their radii scale as $R_k \sim m_k^{1/3} \sim k^{1/3}$.

Conversely, there is another mechanism called *fragmentation* that decreases the sizes of aggregates. If the impact energy is higher than a certain threshold value $E_{\text{imp}} \geq E_{\text{frag}}$, the colliding aggregates break into smaller pieces. The size distribution of the fragmented pieces are difficult to model analytically, and in this work we assume a simplistic model of fragmentation, called *shattering*. When two aggregates of masses m_i and m_j collide with a sufficient energy, both of them shatter into singular monomers, $m_i \rightarrow i \cdot m_1$ and $m_j \rightarrow j \cdot m_1$.

Let us consider a collision of two particles of masses m_i, m_j , and velocities $\mathbf{v}_i, \mathbf{v}_j$ and radii R_i, R_j in the center of mass system (CoM), which moves with velocity $\mathbf{V} = \mu_i \mathbf{v}_i + \mu_j \mathbf{v}_j$, where $\mu_i = m_i/M$, $\mu_j = m_j/M$ and $M = m_i + m_j$. The velocities of particles in the CoM are

$$\mathbf{v}_{ci} = \mu_j \mathbf{g}, \quad \mathbf{v}_{cj} = -\mu_i \mathbf{g}, \quad (1)$$

where $\mathbf{g} = \mathbf{v}_i - \mathbf{v}_j$ is the relative velocity. Obviously, both particles in the CoM have equal amounts of momenta, but oppositely directed

$$\mathbf{p}_{ci} = \mu \mathbf{g} = \mathbf{p}, \quad \mathbf{p}_{cj} = -\mu \mathbf{g} = -\mathbf{p}, \quad (2)$$

where $\mu = m_j \mu_i = m_i \mu_j$ is the reduced mass. In the CoM, the relative velocity vector is

The impact energy is then

$$E_{\text{imp}} = \frac{p^2}{2\mu} = \frac{\mu g^2}{2}. \quad (3)$$

The outcome of the collision depends on the value of E_{imp} . Let us discuss each case in more details.

Restitution

In general, when two particles collide, they rebound from each other and lose some amount of energy, which is given by the restitution coefficient ε . The post-collisional velocities of the colliding particles are given by

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{v}'_i &= \mathbf{v}_i - \mu_j (1 + \varepsilon) (\mathbf{g} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{e}}) \hat{\mathbf{e}}, \\ \mathbf{v}'_j &= \mathbf{v}_j + \mu_i (1 + \varepsilon) (\mathbf{g} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{e}}) \hat{\mathbf{e}}, \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

where $\hat{\mathbf{e}}$ is the unit vector of the impact geometry, e.g. the unit vector pointing from the center of the first particle to the center of the second particle at the moment of the collision

$$\hat{\mathbf{e}} = \frac{\mathbf{r}_i - \mathbf{r}_j}{R_i + R_j}. \quad (5)$$

Aggregation

If the impact energy is smaller than a certain threshold $E_{\text{imp}} \leq E_{\text{agg}}$, the outcome of the collision is merging of two particles. From the momentum conservation we can write the outcome of the aggregative collision, which is a single particle with a mass and velocity

$$m' = m_i + m_j \quad \mathbf{v}' = \mathbf{V} = \frac{m_i \mathbf{v}_i + m_j \mathbf{v}_j}{m_i + m_j}. \quad (6)$$

The total energy loss is

$$\Delta E = \frac{MV^2}{2} - \frac{m_i v_i^2}{2} - \frac{m_j v_j^2}{2} = -\frac{\mu g^2}{2} = -E_{\text{imp}}, \quad (7)$$

so, all the impact energy is lost during the aggregative collision. The threshold energy value E_{agg} is in general a function of the sizes of particles.

Fragmentation

If the impact energy exceeds the certain threshold value $E_{\text{imp}} \geq E_{\text{frag}}$, the two impactors break into into smaller particles in the collision. We cannot obtain the velocities of the monomers from only conservation laws, hence we have to assume that certain constraints are valid. Namely, we assume two constraints:

1. Both particles shatter into their constituent monomers;
2. Complete isotropy of the momenta of the monomers in CoM;

These two constraints allow us to write the outcome velocities of the fragmented pieces.