

PROCESS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF CHIRAL UNSATURATED
ALCOHOLS IN HIGH OPTICAL PURITY

Background of the Invention

5 Chiral alcohols are among the most versatile of
chiral materials due to the ready transformation of the
hydroxyl substituent into a myriad of other functional
groups. These materials find numerous industrial uses
due to their ready incorporation into chiral
10 pharmaceutical and agrochemical agents.

Allylic alcohols are an especially important subset
of chiral alcohols, since the olefin allows remote
functionalization and transformation into various other
groups while retaining the chiral information inherent
15 in the alcohol educt. Efficient and inexpensive methods
to prepare these types of chiral species in high optical
purity are lacking, especially since pharmaceutical/
agrochemical use require optical purities of at least
95% enantiomeric excess (%enantiomer A-% enantiomer B or
20 ee). Catalytic asymmetric reactions are among the most
efficient methods available to generate asymmetry.
Unfortunately, most asymmetric synthetic methods for the
preparation of chiral alcohols are best suited for the
preparation of compounds with an aromatic substituent
25 immediately adjacent to the chiral center, and the
technologies usually afford products of low enantiomeric
excess without this type of structural feature. Indeed,
there are no general methods to prepare chiral allylic
alcohols or derivatives in high optical purity and in
30 high yield through catalytic means. One approach would
be through hydrogenation of enol esters.

Prior Art

The following references describe the catalytic
35 asymmetric hydrogenation of enol esters with various

catalysts: Koenig, K. E.; Bachman, G. L.; Vineyard, B. D. *J. Org. Chem.* 1980, 45, 2362. Selke, R.; Pracejus, H. J. *Mol. Cat.* 1986, 37, 213. Brown, J. M.; Murrer, B. A. *J. Chem. Soc. Perkin Trans. 2* 1982, 489. Fryzuk, M. D.; Bosnich, B. J. *Am. Chem. Soc.* 1978, 100, 5491.

However, the foregoing processes yielded only moderate enantioselectivities.

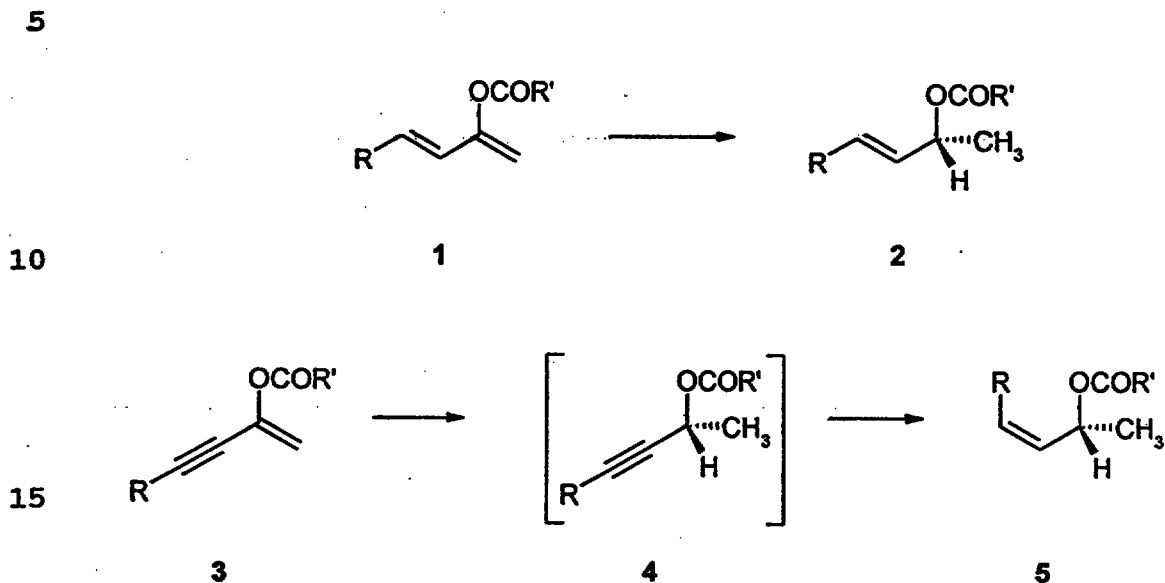
The reduction of cyclic enol esters with moderate to high enantioselectivity using a ruthenium catalyst with an optically pure 2,2-bis(diphenylphosphinol)-1,1'-binaphthyl (BINAP) ligand has been disclosed by Ohta, T.; Miyake, T.; Seido, N.; Kumobayashi, H.; Takaya, H. *J. Org. Chem.* 1995, 60, 357. None of the substrates investigated were aliphatic enol esters, and the hydrogenation of acetophenone enol acetate using this system afforded only poor to moderate enantioselectivity.

High enantioselectivity has been observed for the asymmetric hydrogenation of enol esters using a rhodium(I) catalyst prepared using the chiral ligand 1,2-Bis(2,5-dialkyl-phospholano)benzene (DuPHOS) as reported by Burk, M. J. *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* 1991, 113, 8518. The substrates reported had substituents that varied from aromatic to carboethoxy to trifluoromethyl, and were uniformly hydrogenated with $\geq 89\%$ ee. None of the substrates investigated were aliphatic or olefinic enol esters. There are no examples of catalytic hydrogenation methods to afford aliphatic (or allylic) alcohols or derivatives.

Description of the Invention

The present invention discloses a process comprising the step of converting a dienol or enynol esters to chiral allylic alcohol esters via asymmetric hydrogenation in the presence of a rhodium catalyst and

a chiral bisphosphine ligand. Generally, the allylic alcohol ester has an enantiomeric purity of at least 90% ee. Examples of the process of the present invention are shown below.



Thus, this invention pertains to a novel process for the asymmetric hydrogenation of enol esters to afford chiral alcohol esters in high optical purity. More specifically, this invention pertains to the catalytic asymmetric hydrogenation of enol esters bearing a vinylic or an acetylenic substituent (structural types 1 and 3, respectively) through the use of a chiral rhodium(I) catalyst prepared from a suitable rhodium salt and an optically pure commercially available ligand.

It has been unexpectedly found that chiral allylic alcohol esters may be made in optical purities of at least 90% ee via the asymmetric hydrogenation of dienol esters (structural type 1) or enynol esters (structural type 3) using a rhodium catalyst with a chiral bisphosphine ligand. This is particularly surprising as asymmetric hydrogenation of the aliphatic enol ester

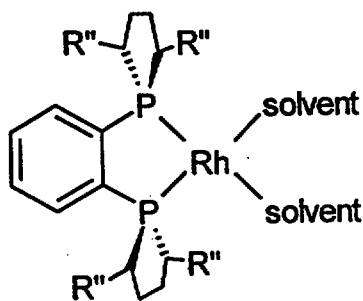
counterparts to 1 or 3 yield products having much lower (< 80% ee) optical purity.

The dienol esters of Formula 1 may be any compound of Formula 1 wherein R and R' are the same or different and are, for example, alkyl (1-20 carbons), substituted C₁₋₂₀ alkyl (wherein the substituents include alkoxy, ester, halide, ketone, and olefin), C₆₋₂₀ aryl, C₆₋₂₀ substituted aryl (wherein the substituents include alkoxy, ester, halide, ketone, and olefin), or C₄₋₂₀ heteroaryl (wherein the hetero groups are selected from S, N, O). Suitable dienol esters may be readily prepared from the corresponding enone. For example, suitable dienyl acetates can be prepared by reaction with isopropenyl acetate under acid catalysis. These reactions are most often performed at reflux with isopropenyl acetate as the solvent utilizing a mineral or sulfonic acid catalyst.

The enynol esters of Formula 3 may be any compound of Formula 3 wherein R and R' are the same or different and are, for example, alkyl (1-20 carbons), substituted C₁₋₂₀ alkyl (wherein the substituents include alkoxy, ester, halide, ketone, and olefin), C₆₋₂₀ aryl, C₆₋₂₀ substituted aryl (wherein the substituents include alkoxy, ester, halide, ketone, and olefin), or C₄₋₂₀ heteroaryl (wherein the hetero groups are selected from N, O, S). Suitable enynol esters may be prepared from the corresponding α,β -acetylenic ketones by enolate formation using a strong base such as a dialkylamide at low temperature (-78°C) in an ethereal solvent such as THF. The enolate formation is followed by reaction with an acid anhydride and warming to ambient temperature.

The dienol or enynol ester is converted into the desired allylic alcohol ester in the presence of a chiral rhodium catalyst under hydrogenation conditions.

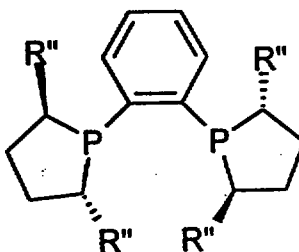
The catalysts used for these transformations are rhodium(I) species (such as A) prepared either discretely or *in situ* from a suitable rhodium salt such as bis(1,5-cyclooctadienyl) rhodium (I) tetra-
5 fluoroborate (which is able from Aldrich Chemical Company) and a chiral bisphosphine ligand.



A

Generally up to 2 mol % of catalyst may be used. The amount of catalyst used is usually between 0.05 and
20 2 mol percent. It should be understood that the reaction rate increases with increasing amount of catalyst and thus, between 0.5 and 2 mol percent of catalyst is preferred for a very rapid reduction. Generally, between 0.5 mol percent and 1 mol percent
25 catalyst is sufficient to provide a reasonable reaction rate.

The preferable ligands for this transformation include the various chiral DuPHOS ligands 6, most preferably the optically pure DuPHOS species wherein R''
30 is selected from alkyl groups having 1 to 4 carbon atoms, of the formula



6

Several of these compounds with different R'' groups are commercially available from Strem Chemical.

The hydrogenation reactions are normally conducted at a temperature between the freezing and boiling point (or apparent boiling point if under pressure) of the solvent and a pressure of between 1 atm and 100 atm. Preferably, the reactions are run between -20°C and 100°C, and most preferably between 0°C and 65°C. It should be noted that higher temperatures and pressures generally afford more rapid reactions. The examples reported below were run at ambient temperature, since this allows sufficient reactivity while not sacrificing enantioselectivity.

The acceptable solvents for the hydrogenations include C₅₋₁₀ hydrocarbons, C₁₋₁₀ cyclic and alicyclic ethers, C₃₋₁₀ esters, C₃₋₁₀ ketones, and lower alcohols having 1 to 5 carbon atoms. More preferable are C₁₋₁₀ cyclic and alicyclic ethers and lower alcohols having 1 to 5 carbon atoms. The most preferable solvents are tetrahydrofuran and methanol. The concentration of the dienol or enynol esters can vary between 0.1 and 2 M in these solvents.

The optical purities of the products were determined by chiral capillary GC using a chiral

Cyclodex-B column (J&W Scientific). For comparison purposes, a control chromatogram of an independently prepared racemic mixture served to verify the identity and resolution of the enantiomeric peaks. The absolute configuration of the products of these reductions was ultimately determined by a comparison of the optical rotation of the product with a literature value. Within the same family, chemical interconversion along with elution order on chiral GC allowed absolute configurational assignment for each reduction.

Examples

Example 1: Catalytic Asymmetric Hydrogenation of 1,3-Nonadien-2-yl acetate

Bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (10 mg; 0.005 mmol; 0.02 equiv) and *R,R*-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethylphospholano)benzene (6, $R'' = \text{CH}_3$; 9 mg; 0.03 mmol; 0.006 equiv) were combined in a pressure tube equipped with a magnetic stir bar under argon. The tube was evacuated and filled with argon five times, and then 2.5 mL of degassed tetrahydrofuran (THF) was added to afford a yellow-orange solution. 1,3-Nonadien-2-yl acetate (1a; 911 mg; 5 mmol) dissolved in 2.5 mL of degassed THF was then added. The reaction mixture was evacuated and filled with argon five times and then was evacuated and filled with hydrogen three times. The reaction mixture was placed under 30 psi of hydrogen and stirred at room temperature overnight, at which time hydrogen uptake had ceased. The vessel was vented and flushed with nitrogen, and the reaction mixture was concentrated to afford 981 mg of crude 3-nonen-2-yl acetate (2a) containing a small amount of the fully saturated analog. Analysis of this material by chiral GC and comparing to authentic racemate showed a 96:4 ratio of enantiomers (92% ee). Conversion to 2-nonanol

(hydrolysis and hydrogenation) and comparison with authentic material indicated the (R) absolute configuration. Thus, the asymmetric hydrogenation of the present invention yielded the desired product having high optical purity. The spectra is shown below:

¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 5.694 (1H, dtd, J = 0.86, 6.68, 15.29 Hz); 5.446 (1H, tdd, J = 1.43, 6.81, 15.33 Hz); 5.305 (1H, m(5), J = 6.47 Hz); 2.034 (3H, s); 2.0 (2H, m); 1.4-1.2 (6H, m); 1.286 (3H, d, J = 6.44 Hz); 0.880 (3H, t, J = 7.05 Hz). Chiral GC (30 m Cyclodex-B column [J&W Scientific], 90°C): t_R(S) 15.260 min; t_R(R) 16.663 min..

Example 2: Catalytic Asymmetric Hydrogenation of 4-phenyl-1,3-butadien-2-yl acetate

This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (20 mg; 0.05 mmol; 0.02 equiv), R,R-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethylphospholano)benzene (6, R'' = CH₃; 18 mg; 0.06 mmol; 0.024 equiv) and 4-phenyl-1,3-butadien-2-yl acetate (1b; 471 mg; 2.5 mmol) in 20 mL of degassed THF. The crude product (0.46 g) was flash-chromatographed and eluted with 1:4 ethyl acetate: heptane to afford 352 mg (74%) of R-4-phenyl-3-buten-2-yl acetate (2b). Chiral GC analysis and comparison with authentic racemate indicated 93.6% ee for R-4-phenyl-3-buten-2-yl acetate. The (R) configuration was indicated by the optical rotation, [α]_D²⁵ +83.7°C (c 2.03, CHCl₃), as compared with the literature value for the (R) enantiomer ([α]_D +93.2°C (c 2.37, CHCl₃) (Burgess, K.; Jennings, L.D. J. Am. Chem. Soc. 1991, 113, 6129). ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 7.4-7.2 (5H, m); 6.612 (1H, d, J = 15.87 Hz); 6.199 (1H, dd, J = 6.75, 15.99 Hz); 5.536 (1H, m(5), J = 6.53 Hz); 2.085 (3H, s); 1.421 (3H, d, J = 6.50 Hz). Chiral GC (30 m Cyclodex-B column [J&W Scientific], 125°C): t_R(S) 17.847 min; t_R(R) 18.553 min.

Example 3: Catalytic Asymmetric Hydrogenation of non-1-en-3-yn-2-yl acetate

This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (10 mg; 0.025 mmol; 0.02 equiv), *R,R*-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethyl-phospholano)benzene (6, $R'' = \text{CH}_3$; 9 mg; 0.03 mmol; 0.024 equiv) and non-1-en-3-yn-2-yl acetate (3a; 225 mg; 1.25 mmol) in 10 mL of degassed THF until hydrogen uptake ceased to afford 0.26 g of crude product. ^1H NMR analysis indicated *Z*-non-3-en-2-yl acetate (5a) as the sole product, and reduction of the olefin followed by chiral GC analysis and comparison to racemate indicated 98.5% ee. The absolute configuration was determined to be (*R*) by reduction of the olefin of *Z*-non-3-en-2-yl acetate to 2-nonyl acetate, and comparison with authentic material.

^1H NMR (CDCl_3) δ 5.642 (1H, m); 5.498 (1H, td, $J = 6.90$, 11.35 Hz); 5.364 (tdd, $J = 1.41$, 8.85, 10.68 Hz); 2.2–2.0 (2H, m); 2.027 (3H, s); 1.4–1.2 (6H, m); 1.276 (3H, d, $J = 6.22$ Hz); 0.885 (3H, t, $J = 6.84$ Hz). Chiral GC of 2-nonyl acetate (30 m Cyclodex-B column [J&W Scientific], 100°C): $t_R(S)$ 9.634 min; $t_R(R)$ 10.395 min.

Example 4: Catalytic Asymmetric Hydrogenation of 4-phenylbut-1-en-3-yn-2-yl acetate

This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (10 mg; 0.025 mmol; 0.02 equiv), *R,R*-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethyl-phospholano)benzene (6, $R'' = \text{CH}_3$; 9 mg; 0.03 mmol; 0.024 equiv) and 4-phenylbut-1-en-3-yn-2-yl acetate (3b; 233 mg; 1.25 mmol) in 10 mL of degassed THF until hydrogen uptake ceased to afford 0.25g of crude product. ^1H NMR analysis indicated *Z*-4-phenyl-3-buten-2-yl acetate (5b) as the sole product, and reduction of the olefin to afford 4-phenyl-2-butyl acetate followed by

chiral GC analysis and comparison to the racemate and authentic *R*-4-phenyl-2-butyl acetate indicated 97.8% ee for *R*-Z-4-phenyl-3-buten-2-yl acetate. Further investigation indicated a bimodal reduction, with 4-phenylbut-1-en-3-yn-2-yl acetate initially chemoselectively and enantioselectively reduced to 4-phenylbut-3-yn-2-yl acetate (4b), which was then more slowly reduced to Z-4-phenyl-3-buten-2-yl acetate (5b). ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 7.4-7.2 (5H, m); 6.540 (1H, d, J = 11.66 Hz); 5.817 (1H, qd, J = 5.68, 8.25 Hz); 5.665 (1H, dd, J = 9.16, 11.66 Hz); 2.028 (3H, s); 1.385 (3H, d, J = 6.17 Hz). Chiral GC of 4-phenyl-2-butyl acetate (30 m Cyclodex-B column [J&W Scientific], 125°C): t_R(S) 11.683 min; t_R(R) 12.126 min.

Example 5: Catalytic Asymmetric Hydrogenation of 6-benzyloxyhex-1-en-3-yn-2-yl acetate

This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (10 mg; 0.025 mmol; 0.02 equiv), *R,R*-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethylphospholano)benzene (6, R" = CH₃; 9 mg; 0.03 mmol; 0.024 equiv) and 6-benzyloxyhex-1-en-3-yn-2-yl acetate (3c; 305 mg; 1.25 mmol) in 10 mL of degassed THF until hydrogen uptake ceased to afford 318 mg of crude product. ¹H NMR analysis indicated Z-6-benzyloxyhex-3-en-2yl acetate (5c) as the sole product, and reduction of the olefin to 6-benzyloxy-2-hexyl acetate followed by chiral GC analysis and comparison to racemate indicated >98% ee for *R*-Z-6-benzyloxyhex-3-en-2yl acetate. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 7.35 (5H, m); 5.65 (1H, m); 5.578 (1H, td, J = 7.14, 10.99 Hz); 5.462 (1H, dd, J = 8.85, 10.75 Hz); 4.519 (2H, s); 3.516 (2H, m); 2.477 (2H, q, J = 6.90 Hz); 2.017 (3H, s); 1.277 (3H, d, J = 6.60 Hz). Chiral GC of 6-benzyloxy-2-hexyl acetate (30 m Cyclodex-B column [J&W Scientific], 165°C): t_R(S) 14.229 min;

$t_R(R)$ 15.149 min.

Comparative Example 1: Catalytic Asymmetric
Hydrogenation of non-1-en-2-yl acetate

5 This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with
bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (10 mg;
0.025 mmol; 0.01 equiv), *R,R*-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethyl-
phospholano)benzene (6, $R'' = CH_3$; 9 mg; 0.03 mmol; 0.012
10 equiv) and non-1-en-2-yl acetate (461 mg; 2.5 mmol) in
10 mL of degassed THF until hydrogen uptake ceased (2 h)
to afford 0.46 g of crude product. 1H NMR analysis
indicated 2-nonyl acetate as the sole product, and
chiral GC analysis and comparison to racemate indicated
64.0% ee for 2-nonyl acetate. Hydrolysis of the acetate
15 to 2-nonanol and comparison of the optical rotation,
 $[\alpha]_D^{24} -13.9^\circ$ (c 1.15, benzene), with the literature
value for the (*S*) enantiomer, $[\alpha]_D^{18} +11.4^\circ$ (c 1.30,
benzene) (Mori, K.; Ogita, H. *Leibigs Ann. Chem.* 1994,
1065.), indicated the (*R*) configuration for 2-nonyl
20 acetate.
 1H NMR ($CDCl_3$) δ 4.886 (1H, m(6), $J = 6.93$ Hz); 2.029
(3H, s); 1.6-1.2 (12 H, m); 1.202 (3H, d, $J = 6.26$ Hz);
0.879 (3H, t, $J = 6.53$ Hz). Chiral GC (30 m Cyclodex-B
column [J&W Scientific], 100°C): $t_R(S)$ 9.634 min; $t_R(R)$
25 10.395 min.

Comparative Example 2: Catalytic Asymmetric
Hydrogenation of 4-phenylbut-1-en-2-yl acetate

30 This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with
bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (20 mg;
0.05 mmol; 0.02 equiv) *R,R*-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethyl-
phospholano)benzene (6, $R'' = CH_3$; (18 mg; 0.06 mmol;
0.024 equiv) and 4-phenylbut-1-en-2-yl acetate (476 mg;
2.5 mmol) in 20 mL of degassed THF until hydrogen uptake
35 ceased (1.5 h) to afford 0.51 g of crude product. 1H

NMR analysis indicated 4-phenyl-2-butyl acetate as the sole product, and chiral GC analysis and comparison to racemate indicated 77% ee for 4-phenyl-2-butyl acetate. Base hydrolysis afforded 4-phenyl-2-butanol, $[\alpha]_D^{25}$ -12.0° (c 2.115, CHCl₃), which indicates the (R) configuration when compared with the known rotation ($[\alpha]_D +13.5^\circ$ (c 2.1, CHCl₃)) for the (S) enantiomer. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 7.35-7.15 (5H, m); 4.946 (1H, m(6), J = 6.53 Hz); 2.65 (2H, m); 2.039 (3H, s); 1.95 (1H, m); 1.8 (1H, m); 1.259 (3H, d, J = 6.11 Hz). Chiral GC (30 m Cyclodex-B column [J&W Scientific], 125°C): $t_R(S)$ 11.683 min; $t_R(R)$ 12.126 min.

Comparative Example 3: Catalytic Asymmetric Hydrogenation of 5-acetoxy-5-hexenyl tosylate

This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (10 mg; 0.025 mmol; 0.02 equiv) and R,R-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethylphospholano)benzene (6, R" = CH₃; 9 mg; 0.03 mmol; 0.024 equiv) and 5-acetoxy-5-hexenyl tosylate (389 mg; 1.25 mmol) in 10 mL of degassed THF until hydrogen uptake ceased (1 h) to afford 407 mg of crude product. ¹H NMR analysis indicated 5-acetoxyhexyl tosylate as the sole product, and hydrolysis of the acetate, conversion of the resulting 5-hydroxyhexyl tosylate to the α -methoxy- α -trifluoromethylphenylacetate (using the corresponding optically pure acid chloride), ¹H NMR analysis and comparison to the racemate indicated 78% ee for 5-acetoxyhexyl tosylate. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 7.792 (2H, d, J = 8.36 Hz); 7.353 (2H, d, J = 8.03 Hz); 4.830 (1H, m(6), J = 5.22 Hz); 4.020 (2H, t, J = 6.38 Hz); 2.456 (3H, s); 2.017 (3H, s); 1.7-1.2 (6H, m); 1.174 (3H, d, J = 6.32 Hz).

Comparative Example 4: Catalytic Asymmetric Hydrogenation of ethyl 5-acetoxyhex-5-enoate

This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (10 mg; 0.025 mmol; 0.02 equiv), *R,R*-1,2-bis(2,5-dimethyl-phospholano)benzene (6, *R*" = CH₃; 9 mg; 0.03 mmol; 0.024 equiv) and ethyl 5-acetoxyhex-5-enoate (ca. 50% pure; 500 mg; 1.25 mmol) in 10 mL of degassed THF until hydrogen uptake ceased (1 h) to afford 490 mg of crude product. ¹H NMR analysis indicated ethyl 5-acetoxyhexanoate as the sole product, and chiral GC analysis (30 m Cyclodex-B column (J&W Scientific), 120°C, 20 min) and comparison to racemate indicated 72% ee for ethyl 5-acetoxyhex-5-enoate.

¹H NMR (CDCl₃) δ 4.894 (1H, m(6), *J* = 6.25 Hz); 4.123 (2H, q, *J* = 6.17 Hz); 2.3 (2H, m); 2.025 (3H, s); 1.7-1.5 (4H, m); 1.250 (3H, t, *J* = 7.14 Hz); 1.214 (3H, d, *J* = 6.93 Hz). Chiral GC (30 m Cyclodex-B column [J&W Scientific], 120°C): *t*_R(*S*) 12.16 min; *t*_R(*R*) 12.75 min.

Comparative Example 5: Catalytic Asymmetric Hydrogenation of ethyl 5-acetoxyhex-5-enoate using BINAP Ligand

This reaction was performed as in Example 1 with bis(cyclooctadienyl)rhodium tetrafluoroborate (10 mg; 0.025 mmol; 0.02 equiv), *R,R*-2,2'-bis(diphenylphosphino)-1,1'-binaphthyl (*R,R*-BINAP) (18 mg; 0.03 mmol; 0.024 equiv), and ethyl 5-acetoxyhex-5-enoate (ca. 50% pure; 500 mg; 1.25 mmol) in 10 mL of degassed THF overnight to afford 490 mg of crude product. ¹H NMR analysis indicated ethyl 5-acetoxyhexanoate as the sole product (although much residual ethyl 5-acetoxyhex-5-enoate was noted), and chiral GC analysis (30 m Cyclodex-B column (J&W Scientific), 120°C, 20 min) and comparison to racemate indicated 32% ee for ethyl 5-

acetoxyhexanoate.

Table 1, below summarizes the results of Examples 1-5 and Comparative Examples 1-5.

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Table 1

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Ex. #	Product	optical purity (%ee)
1	3-nonen-2-yl acetate	92
2	4-phenyl-3-buten-2-yl acetate	93.6
3	Z-non-3-en-2-yl acetate	98.5
4	Z-4-phenyl-3-buten-2-yl acetate	97.8
5	Z-6-benzyloxyhex-3-en-2-yl acetate	>98
CE 1	3-nonyl acetate	64
CE 2	4-phenyl-2-butyl acetate	77
CE 3	5-acetoxyhexyl tosylate	78
CE 4	ethyl 5-acetoxyhexanoate	72
CE 5	ethyl 5-acetoxyhexanoate	32

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Clearly the optical purities afforded by the hydrogenation of a aliphatic enol acetate compound (Comparative Examples 1-5) are not suitable for pharmaceutical and agricultural uses.

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There was no reason to expect that including unsaturation would lead to improved results. Thus, it was very surprising to find that the enantioselectivity of the catalytic asymmetric hydrogenation of the substrates used in Examples 1 and 2 (structural type 1) was greatly enhanced compared to the saturated species (Comparative Examples 1 and 2). For example, the catalytic asymmetric hydrogenation of 1,3-nonadien-2-yl acetate (Example 1) afforded an optical purity of 94%

ee, whereas the aliphatic analog non-1-en-2-yl acetate afforded only 64% ee using the same catalyst and conditions. As is shown by Example 2 this high enantioselectivity was not limited to one particular substrate.

Even more surprising were the results obtained for the asymmetric hydrogenation of acetylenic substrates of structural type 3 (Examples 3-5). These types of compounds afforded under the standard asymmetric hydrogenation conditions a bimodal reduction, initially affording propargyllic alcohol ester 4. This material underwent further reduction to afford the Z-allylic acetate 5. The enantioselectivity engendered in the initial reduction step is greater than 97% ee, which was surprising in view of the selectivities of the saturated enol esters. Moreover, this type of enantioselectivity is in the range that is considered useful for pharmaceutical and agrochemical use. Examples 3-5 clearly indicate that this type of enantioselectivity is general for structures of type 3.

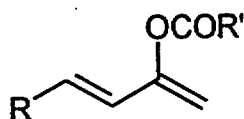


WE CLAIM:

1. A process comprising the step of converting a dienol or enynol ester to a chiral allylic alcohol ester via asymmetric hydrogenation in the presence of a rhodium catalyst, at least one solvent and a chiral bisphosphine ligand.

2. The process of claim 1 wherein said allylic alcohol ester has an enantiomeric purity of at least 90% ee.

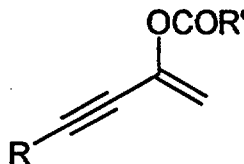
3. The process of claim 1 wherein said dienol acetate is compound of formula 1:



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wherein R is selected from the group consisting of C₁₋₂₀ alkyl, substituted C₁₋₂₀ alkyl, C₆₋₂₀ aryl, substituted C₆₋₂₀ aryl and C₄₋₂₀ heteroaryl.

4. The process of claim 1 wherein said enynol acetate is compound of formula 3:



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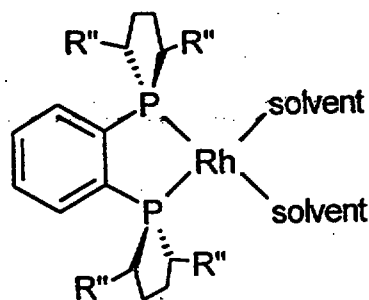
wherein R and R' may be the same or different and are selected from the group consisting of C₁₋₂₀ alkyl,



substituted C₁₋₂₀ alkyl, C₆₋₂₀ aryl, substituted C₆₋₂₀ aryl and C₄₋₂₀ heteroaryl.

5. The process of claim 1 wherein said rhodium catalyst is a rhodium(I) species of the formula:

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6. The process of claim 5 wherein said rhodium catalyst is prepared from a rhodium salt and a chiral ligand.

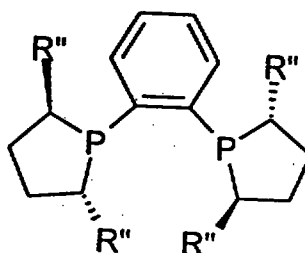
7. The process of claim 5 wherein up to 2 mol percent of said catalyst is used.

8. The process of claim 5 wherein between 0.5 and 2 mol percent of catalyst is used.

9. The process of claim 5 wherein between 0.5 mol % and 1 mol percent catalyst is used.

10. The process of claim 5 wherein said chiral ligand is a compound of the formula

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35 wherein R" may be the same or different and is selected



from the group consisting of alkyl groups having 1 to 4 carbon atoms.

5 11. The process of claim 1 wherein said converting step is conducted at a temperature between the freezing and boiling point (or apparent boiling point if under pressure) of the solvent.

12. The process of claim 1 wherein said converting step is conducted at a temperature between -20°C and 100°C.

10 13. The process of claim 1 wherein said converting step is conducted at a temperature between 0°C and 65°C.

14. The process of claim 1 wherein said converting step is conducted at a pressure between 1 atm and 100 atm.

15 15. The process of claim 1 wherein said converting step is conducted at a pressure between 1 and 5 atm.

16. The process of claim 1 wherein said solvent is selected from the group consisting of C₅₋₁₀ hydrocarbons, C₂₋₁₀ cyclic or alicyclic ethers, C₃₋₁₀ esters, C₃₋₁₀ ketones, and C₁₋₅ lower alcohols and mixtures thereof.

17. The process of claim 1 wherein said solvent is selected from the group consisting of C₂₋₁₀ cyclic or alicyclic ethers and C₁₋₅ lower alcohols.

25 18. The process of claim 1 wherein said solvent is tetrahydrofuran or methanol.

19. The process of claim 1 wherein said dienol or enynol acetates is present in said solvent in a concentration between 0.1 and 2 M.

30 20. A process comprising the step of converting an enynol acetate to a propargyllic alcohol ester via asymmetric hydrogenation in the presence of a rhodium



- 19 -

catalyst, at least one solvent and a chiral bisphosphine ligand.