

## SOME REMARKS ON CONNECTORS AND GROUPOIDS IN GOURSAT CATEGORIES

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ABSTRACT: We prove that connectors are stable under quotients in any (regular) Goursat category. As a consequence, the category  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$  of connectors in  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category whenever  $\mathbb{C}$  is. This implies that Goursat categories can be characterised in terms of a simple property of internal groupoids.

KEYWORDS: Goursat categories, 3-permutable varieties, Shifting Lemma, connectors, groupoids.

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Over the last twenty years the property of  $n$ -permutability of congruences in a variety of universal algebras has been investigated from a categorical perspective (see [7, 12, 18], for instance, and references therein). When  $\mathbb{C}$  is a regular category, the 2-permutability property, usually called the *Mal'tsev* property, is a concept giving rise to a beautiful theory, whose main features are collected in [1]. Many important results still hold when a regular category  $\mathbb{C}$  satisfies the strictly weaker property of 3-permutability, namely the *Goursat* property. A nice feature of a (regular) Goursat category  $\mathbb{C}$  is that the lattice of equivalence relations on any object in  $\mathbb{C}$  is a modular lattice [7], a property that plays a crucial role in commutator theory [9, 16].

The aim of this paper is twofold: first of all we establish some basic properties of Goursat categories in terms of connectors [4], as it was done in [5] for the case of Mal'tsev categories. These results have turned out to be useful to develop a monoidal approach to internal structures [11]. We then give a new characterisation of Goursat categories in terms of properties of (internal) groupoids, on the model of what was done in [10] in the case of Mal'tsev categories.

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In the first section, we recall the main properties of Goursat categories that will be needed throughout the paper. In Section 2 we prove that for any Goursat category  $\mathbb{C}$ , the category  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  of equivalence relations in  $\mathbb{C}$  is also a Goursat category (Proposition 2.2) (see also [2]). We use this result to give some properties of Goursat categories in terms of connectors in Section 3. More precisely, we show that, when  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category, then connectors are stable under quotients in  $\mathbb{C}$  (Proposition 3.6), and this implies that the category  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$  of connectors in  $\mathbb{C}$  is again a Goursat category (Theorem 3.8).

We conclude the paper by giving a new characterisation of Goursat categories in terms of properties of groupoids (Theorem 3.9). It turns out that a regular category  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category if and only if the category  $\text{Grpd}(\mathbb{C})$  of groupoids in  $\mathbb{C}$  is closed under quotients in the category  $\text{RG}(\mathbb{C})$  of reflexive graphs in  $\mathbb{C}$ .

## 1. Preliminaries

In this section we recall some basic definitions and properties of (regular) Goursat categories, needed throughout the article. We shall always assume that the category  $\mathbb{C}$  in which we are working is a **regular category**: this means that  $\mathbb{C}$  is finitely complete, regular epimorphisms are stable under pullbacks, and kernel pairs have coequalisers. Equivalently, any arrow  $f : A \rightarrow B$  has a unique factorisation  $f = i \circ r$  (up to isomorphism), where  $r$  is a regular epimorphism and  $i$  is a monomorphism and this factorisation is pullback stable.

A **relation**  $R$  from  $X$  to  $Y$  is a subobject  $\langle r_1, r_2 \rangle : R \rightrightarrows X \times Y$ . The opposite relation of  $R$ , denoted  $R^o$ , is the relation from  $Y$  to  $X$  given by the subobject  $\langle r_2, r_1 \rangle : R \rightrightarrows Y \times X$ . A relation  $R$  from  $X$  to  $X$  is called a relation on  $X$ . We shall identify a morphism  $f : X \rightarrow Y$  with the relation  $\langle 1_X, f \rangle : X \rightrightarrows X \times Y$  and write  $f^o$  for its opposite relation. Given another relation  $\langle s_1, s_2 \rangle : S \rightrightarrows Y \times Z$  from  $Y$  to  $Z$ , one can define the composite relation  $SR$  of  $R$  and  $S$  as the regular image of the arrow  $(r_1 \circ p_1, s_2 \circ p_2) : R \times_Y S \rightarrow X \times Z$ , where  $(R \times_Y S, p_1, p_2)$  is the pullback of  $r_2 : R \rightarrow Y$  along  $s_1 : S \rightarrow Y$ . With the above notations, any relation  $\langle r_1, r_2 \rangle : R \rightrightarrows X \times Y$  can be seen as the relational composite  $r_2 r_1^o$ .

The following properties are well known and easy to prove. We collect them in the following lemma:

**Lemma 1.1.** *Let  $f : X \rightarrow Y$  be an arrow in a regular category  $\mathbb{C}$ , and let  $i \circ r$  be its (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation. Then:*

- (1)  $f \circ f$  is the kernel pair of  $f$ , thus  $1_X \leq f \circ f$ ; moreover,  $1_X = f \circ f$  if and only if  $f$  is a monomorphism;
- (2)  $f f^o$  is  $(i, i)$ , thus  $f f^o \leq 1_Y$ ; moreover,  $f f^o = 1_Y$  if and only if  $f$  is a regular epimorphism;
- (3)  $f f^o f = f$  and  $f^o f f^o = f^o$ .

**Definition 1.2.** A relation  $(R, r_1, r_2)$  on an object  $X$  is said to be :

- **reflexive** when there is an arrow  $r : X \rightarrow R$  such that  $r_1 \circ r = 1_X = r_2 \circ r$ ;
- **symmetric** when there is an arrow  $\sigma : R \rightarrow R$  such that  $r_2 = r_1 \circ \sigma$  and  $r_1 = r_2 \circ \sigma$ ;
- **transitive** when, by considering the following pullback

$$\begin{array}{ccc} R \times_X R & \xrightarrow{p_2} & R \\ p_1 \downarrow & \lrcorner & \downarrow r_1 \\ R & \xrightarrow{r_2} & X, \end{array}$$

there is an arrow  $t : R \times_X R \rightarrow R$  such that  $r_1 \circ t = r_1 \circ p_1$  and  $r_2 \circ t = r_2 \circ p_2$ .

- an **equivalence relation** if  $R$  is reflexive, symmetric and transitive.

In particular, a kernel pair  $\langle f_1, f_2 \rangle : \text{Eq}(f) \rightarrow X \times X$  of a morphism  $f : X \rightarrow Y$  is an equivalence relation.

Let  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  be the category whose objects are equivalence relations in  $\mathbb{C}$  and arrows from  $\langle r_1, r_2 \rangle : R \rightarrow X \times X$  to  $\langle s_1, s_2 \rangle : S \rightarrow Y \times Y$  are pairs  $(f, g)$  of arrows in  $\mathbb{C}$  making the following diagram commute

$$\begin{array}{ccc} R & \xrightarrow{g} & S \\ r_1 \downarrow \parallel r_2 & & s_1 \downarrow \parallel s_2 \\ X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y. \end{array}$$

When  $\mathbb{C}$  is a regular category,  $(R, r_1, r_2)$  is an equivalence relation on  $X$  and  $f : X \rightarrow Y$  a regular epimorphism, we define the **regular image of  $R$  along  $f : X \rightarrow Y$**  to be the relation  $f(R)$  on  $Y$  induced by the (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation  $\langle s_1, s_2 \rangle \circ \psi$  of the composite  $(f \times$

$f) \circ \langle r_1, r_2 \rangle$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} R & \xrightarrow{\psi} & f(R) \\ \langle r_1, r_2 \rangle \downarrow & & \downarrow \langle s_1, s_2 \rangle \\ X \times X & \xrightarrow{f \times f} & Y \times Y. \end{array}$$

Note that the regular image  $f(R)$  can be obtained as the relational composite  $f(R) = fRf^o = fr_2r_1^o f^o$ . When  $R$  is an equivalence relation,  $f(R)$  is also reflexive and symmetric. In a general regular category  $f(R)$  is not necessarily an equivalence relation. This is the case in a *Goursat category* (Theorem 1.4).

**Definition 1.3.** [7] A regular category  $\mathbb{C}$  is called a **Goursat category** when the equivalence relations in  $\mathbb{C}$  are 3-permutable, i.e.  $RSR = SRS$  for any pair of equivalence relations  $R$  and  $S$  on the same object.

The following characterisation will be useful in the sequel:

**Theorem 1.4.** [7] *A regular category  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category if and only if for any regular epimorphism  $f : X \twoheadrightarrow Y$  and any equivalence relation  $R$  on  $X$ , the regular image  $f(R) = fRf^o$  of  $R$  along  $f$  is an equivalence relation.*

There are many important algebraic examples of Goursat categories. Indeed, by a classical theorem in [17], a variety of universal algebras is a Goursat category precisely when its theory has two ternary operations  $r$  and  $s$  such that the identities  $r(x, y, y) = x$ ,  $r(x, x, y) = s(x, y, y)$  and  $s(x, x, y) = y$  hold. Accordingly, the categories of groups, abelian groups, modules over some fixed ring, crossed modules, quasi-groups, rings, associative algebras, Heyting algebras and implication algebras are all Goursat categories.

Any regular *Mal'tsev* category is a Goursat category, thus, in particular, so is any semi-abelian category.

Many interesting properties of Goursat categories can be found in the literature (see [7, 14, 15] and references therein). In particular, the following characterisations will be useful for the development of this work:

**Theorem 1.5.** [14] *Let  $\mathbb{C}$  be a regular category. The following conditions are equivalent:*

- (i)  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category;

- (ii) any pushout where  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  are regular epimorphisms and  $f$  and  $g$  are split epimorphisms in  $\mathbb{C}$

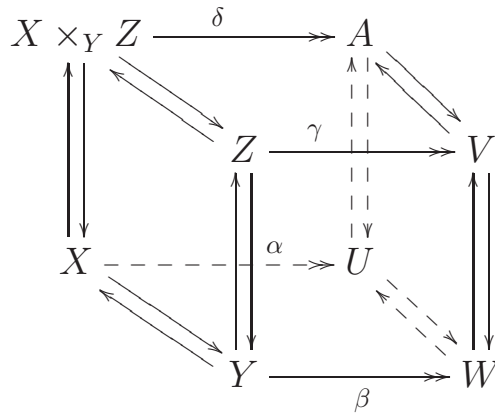
$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 X & \xrightarrow{\alpha} & U \\
 s \updownarrow f & & t \updownarrow g \\
 Y & \xrightarrow{\beta} & W
 \end{array}$$

is a **Goursat pushout**: the morphism  $\lambda : \text{Eq}(f) \rightarrow \text{Eq}(g)$  induced by the universal property of kernel pair  $\text{Eq}(g)$  of  $g$  is a regular epimorphism.

We recall part of Theorem 1.3 in [15]:

**Theorem 1.6.** [15] *Let  $\mathbb{C}$  be a regular category. The following conditions are equivalent:*

- (i)  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category;
- (ii) for any commutative cube



where the left square is a pullback of split epimorphisms, the right square is a commutative square of split epimorphisms and the horizontal arrows  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$  are regular epimorphisms (commuting also with the splittings), then the right square is a pullback.

## 2. Equivalence relations in Goursat categories

In this section we prove that  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  is a Goursat category for any Goursat category  $\mathbb{C}$ .

The category  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  is finitely complete whenever  $\mathbb{C}$  is. Note that kernel pairs in  $\mathbb{C}$  are computed “levelwise”, i.e. the kernel pair of a morphism  $(f, g)$

in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  is given by the kernel pairs  $\text{Eq}(f)$  of  $f$  and  $\text{Eq}(g)$  of  $g$  in  $\mathbb{C}$

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \text{Eq}(g) & \xrightarrow{g_1} & R & \xrightarrow{g} & S \\ & \xrightarrow{g_2} & & & \\ \bar{r}_1 \downarrow \bar{r}_2 & & r_1 \downarrow r_2 & & s_1 \downarrow s_2 \\ \text{Eq}(f) & \xrightarrow{f_1} & X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y. \\ & \xrightarrow{f_2} & & & \end{array} \quad (1)$$

Consequently, a morphism  $(f, g)$  is a monomorphism in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  if and only if  $f$  and  $g$  are monomorphisms in  $\mathbb{C}$ . When  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category, a similar property holds with respect to regular epimorphisms:

**Lemma 2.1.** *Let  $R$  and  $S$  be two equivalence relations in a Goursat category  $\mathbb{C}$  and  $(f, g) : R \rightarrow S$  a morphism*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} R & \xrightarrow{g} & S \\ r_1 \downarrow r_2 & & s_1 \downarrow s_2 \\ X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y \end{array} \quad (2)$$

in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$ . Then  $(f, g)$  is a regular epimorphism in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  if and only if  $f$  and  $g$  are regular epimorphisms in  $\mathbb{C}$ .

*Proof:* When  $f$  and  $g$  are regular epimorphisms in  $\mathbb{C}$ , it is not difficult to check that  $(f, g)$  is necessarily the coequaliser of its kernel pair in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  given in (1) (one uses the fact that  $g = \text{coeq}(g_1, g_2)$  and  $f = \text{coeq}(f_1, f_2)$  in  $\mathbb{C}$ ).

Conversely, let  $(f, g)$  be a morphism in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  as in (2) that is a regular epimorphism in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$ . Consider the kernel pairs of  $f$  and  $g$ , the (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation  $f = i \circ q$  of  $f$ , and the regular image  $(q(R), t_1, t_2)$  of  $(R, r_1, r_2)$  along  $q$ . We obtain the following

commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 \text{Eq}(g) & \xrightarrow{g_1} & R & \xrightarrow{g} & S \\
 \parallel & \xrightarrow{g_2} & \parallel & \searrow \alpha & \parallel \\
 \bar{r}_1 & & \bar{r}_2 & & r_1 & r_2 & q(R) & s_1 & s_2 \\
 \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\
 \text{Eq}(f) & \xrightarrow{f_1} & X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y, \\
 \parallel & \xrightarrow{f_2} & \parallel & \searrow q & \parallel & \downarrow & \parallel & \nearrow i \\
 & & & & & Z & & & 
 \end{array} \tag{3}$$

where  $(q(R), t_1, t_2) \in \text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  (by Theorem 1.4) and  $(i, j)$  is the morphism in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  such that  $(i, j) \circ (q, \alpha) = (f, g)$ . Note that  $j$  is induced from the fact that  $i \times i \circ \langle t_1, t_2 \rangle \circ \alpha$  is the (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation of  $\langle s_1, s_2 \rangle \circ g$ , thus it is a monomorphism. From the fact that  $(f, g)$  is the coequaliser of its kernel pair in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  it easily follows that  $(i, j)$  is an isomorphism in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$ . This implies that  $f$  and  $g$  are regular epimorphisms in  $\mathbb{C}$ . ■

**Proposition 2.2.**  *$\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  is a Goursat category whenever  $\mathbb{C}$  is.*

*Proof:* The category  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  is finitely complete because  $\mathbb{C}$  is so. Lemma 2.1 implies that regular epimorphisms in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  are stable under pull-backs since regular epimorphisms are stable in  $\mathbb{C}$ , and regular epimorphisms in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  are “levelwise” regular epimorphisms. The existence of the (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation of a morphism  $(f, g)$  as in (2) in the category  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  follows from the construction of diagram (3): the (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation  $f = i \circ q$  of  $f$  in  $\mathbb{C}$  gives rise to the (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation  $g = j \circ \alpha$  of  $g$  in  $\mathbb{C}$ . Thus  $(q, \alpha) \circ (i, j)$  is the (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation of  $(f, g)$  in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$ . To see that  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  has the Goursat property one uses Theorem 1.4: to check that the regular image of an equivalence relation in the category  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  is again an equivalence in  $\text{Equiv}(\mathbb{C})$  one mainly uses the same property in the category  $\mathbb{C}$ . ■

### 3. Connectors and groupoids in Goursat categories

In this section we prove that connectors are stable under quotients in any Goursat category  $\mathbb{C}$ . We then define the category  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$  of connectors in

$\mathbb{C}$  whose objects are pairs of equivalence relations equipped with a connector, and prove that  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$  is a Goursat category whenever the base category  $\mathbb{C}$  is. We conclude by giving a new characterisation of Goursat categories in terms of proprieties of groupoids.

**Definition 3.1.** Let  $(R, r_1, r_2)$  and  $(S, s_1, s_2)$  be two equivalence relations on an object  $X$  and  $R \times_X S$  the pullback of  $r_2$  along  $s_1$ . A **connector** [4] between  $R$  and  $S$  is an arrow  $p : R \times_X S \longrightarrow X$  in  $\mathbb{C}$  such that

- (1)  $xSp(x, y, z)Rz$ ;
- (2)  $p(x, x, y) = y$ ;
- (3)  $p(x, y, y) = x$ ;
- (4)  $p(x, y, p(z, u, v)) = p(p(x, y, z), u, v)$ .

**Examples 3.2.** (a) If  $\nabla_X$  is the largest equivalence relation on an object  $X$ , then an associative Mal'tsev operation

$$p : X \times X \times X \longrightarrow X$$

is precisely a connector between  $\nabla_X$  and  $\nabla_X$ .

(b) Given a reflexive graph

$$X_1 \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{d} \\ \xleftarrow{e} \\ \xrightarrow{c} \end{array} X_0$$

in a finitely complete category  $\mathcal{C}$  (i.e.  $d \circ e = 1_{X_0} = c \circ e$ ) then the connectors between  $\text{Eq}(c)$  and  $\text{Eq}(d)$  are in bijections with the groupoid structures on this reflexive graph [8].

It is well known that Goursat categories satisfy the so-called *Shifting Property* [16, 6]. In this context connectors are unique when they exist (Theorem 2.13 and Proposition 5.1 in [6]): accordingly, for a given pair of equivalence relations on the same object the fact of having a connector becomes a *property*.

**Definition 3.3.** Let  $R$  and  $S$  be two equivalence relations on an object  $X$ . A **double equivalence relation** on  $R$  and  $S$  is given by an object  $C \in \mathbb{C}$  equipped with two equivalence relations  $(\pi_1, \pi_2) : C \rightrightarrows R$  and  $(p_1, p_2) : C \rightrightarrows S$ .



$S$  such that the following diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 C & \xrightarrow{\pi_1} & R \\
 p_1 \downarrow & \begin{array}{c} \pi_2 \\ \downarrow \\ p_2 \end{array} & r_1 \downarrow r_2 \\
 S & \xrightarrow[s_2]{s_1} & X
 \end{array}$$

commutes (in the “obvious” way).

A double equivalence relation  $C$  on  $R$  and  $S$  is called a **centralizing relation** [8] when the square

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 C & \xrightarrow{\pi_1} & R \\
 p_1 \downarrow & \lrcorner & \downarrow r_1 \\
 S & \xrightarrow[s_1]{} & X
 \end{array}$$

is a pullback. Under this assumption it follows that any of the commutative squares in the definition of a centralizing relation is a pullback.

The following lemma gives the relationship between connectors and centralizing relations.

**Lemma 3.4.** [5] *If  $\mathbb{C}$  is a category with finite limits and  $R$  and  $S$  are two equivalence relations on the same object  $X$ , then the following conditions are equivalent:*

- (i) *there exists a connector between  $R$  and  $S$ ;*
- (ii) *there exists a centralizing relation on  $R$  and  $S$ .*

When  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Mal'tsev category,  $R$  and  $S$  are equivalence relations on an object  $X$  with a connector and  $i : I \rightarrow X$  is a monomorphism, then the inverse images  $i^{-1}(R)$  and  $i^{-1}(S)$  also have a connector [4]. We establish a similar property for Goursat categories, with respect to regular epimorphisms:

**Proposition 3.5.** *Let  $\mathbb{C}$  be a Goursat category,  $R$  and  $S$  two equivalence relations on an object  $X$ , and let  $f : X \twoheadrightarrow Y$  be a regular epimorphism. If there exists a connector between  $R$  and  $S$ , then there exists a connector between the regular images  $f(R)$  and  $f(S)$ .*

*Proof:* Suppose that there exists a connector between  $R$  and  $S$ . This implies that there exists a centralizing relation  $(C, (\pi_1, \pi_2), (p_1, p_2))$  on  $R$  and  $S$ . Consider the regular image  $(f(R), a, b)$  and  $(f(S), c, d)$  of  $R$  and  $S$  along  $f$ .

We obtain the following diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 C & \xrightarrow{\alpha} & f_R(C) & & \\
 \downarrow p_1 & \searrow \pi_2 & \downarrow \beta_2 & & \\
 & \pi_1 & & & \\
 & \downarrow p_2 & & & \\
 R & \xrightarrow{f_R} & f(R) & & \\
 \downarrow r_1 & & \downarrow a & & \\
 & & \downarrow b & & \\
 S & \xrightarrow{f_S} & f(S) & & \\
 \downarrow s_2 & & \downarrow d & & \\
 & & \downarrow c & & \\
 X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y & & 
 \end{array} \tag{4}$$

where  $(f_R(C), \beta_1, \beta_2)$  is the regular image of the equivalence relation  $(C, \pi_1, \pi_2)$  along the regular epimorphism  $f_R$ . The fact that the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 C & \xrightarrow{\alpha} & f_R(C) \\
 \langle f_S p_1, f_S p_2 \rangle \downarrow & & \downarrow \langle a \beta_1, b \beta_2 \rangle \\
 f(S) \times f(S) & \xrightarrow{\langle c, d \rangle} & Y \times Y
 \end{array}$$

commutes,  $\alpha$  is a strong epimorphism and  $\langle c, d \rangle$  is a monomorphism, implies the existence of the two arrows  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2 : f_R(C) \rightarrow f(S)$  making diagram (4) commute. The relations  $(f_R(C), \beta_1, \beta_2)$ ,  $(f(R), a, b)$  and  $(f(S), c, d)$  are all equivalence relations by Theorem 1.4. It is then easy to check that the relation  $(f_R(C), \alpha_1, \alpha_2)$  is an equivalence relation on  $f(S)$ . By assumption all the left squares of (4) are pullbacks, so it follows that all the right squares of (4) are pullbacks as well by Theorem 1.6 (ii). Then  $(f_R(C), (\alpha_1, \alpha_2), (\beta_1, \beta_2))$  is a centralizing relation on  $f(R)$  and  $f(S)$ . By Lemma 3.4 there is a connector between  $f(R)$  and  $f(S)$ . ■

We are now going to show that the category whose objects are pairs of equivalence relations equipped with a connector is a Goursat category whenever the base category is a Goursat category. For this, let us first fix some notation: if  $\mathbb{C}$  is a finitely complete category, we write  $2\text{-Eq}(\mathbb{C})$  for the category whose objects  $(R, S, X)$  are pairs of equivalence relations  $R$  and  $S$  on

the same object  $X$

$$R \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{r_1} \\ \xrightarrow{r_2} \end{array} X \begin{array}{c} \xleftarrow{s_1} \\ \xleftarrow{s_2} \end{array} S$$

and arrows are triples  $(f_R, f_S, f)$  making the following diagram commute:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} R & \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{r_1} \\ \xrightarrow{r_2} \end{array} & X & \begin{array}{c} \xleftarrow{s_1} \\ \xleftarrow{s_2} \end{array} & S \\ f_R \downarrow & & f \downarrow & & \downarrow f_S \\ \bar{R} & \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{\bar{r}_1} \\ \xrightarrow{\bar{r}_2} \end{array} & \bar{X} & \begin{array}{c} \xleftarrow{\bar{s}_1} \\ \xleftarrow{\bar{s}_2} \end{array} & \bar{S}. \end{array} \quad (5)$$

We write  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$  for the category whose objects  $(R, S, X, p)$  are pairs of equivalence relations  $R$  and  $S$  on an object  $X$  with a given connector  $p : R \times_X S \rightarrow X$ ; arrows in  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$  are arrows in  $2\text{-Eq}(\mathbb{C})$  respecting the connectors. This means that, given a diagram (4) where both  $(R, S, X)$  and  $(\bar{R}, \bar{S}, \bar{X})$  are in  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$ , with  $p : R \times_X S \rightarrow X$  and  $\bar{p} : \bar{R} \times_{\bar{X}} \bar{S} \rightarrow \bar{X}$  the corresponding connectors, then the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} R \times_X S & \xrightarrow{\bar{f}} & \bar{R} \times_{\bar{X}} \bar{S} \\ p \downarrow & & \downarrow \bar{p} \\ X & \xrightarrow{f} & \bar{X} \end{array}$$

commutes, where  $\bar{f}$  is the natural map induced by the universal property of the pullback  $\bar{R} \times_{\bar{X}} \bar{S}$ .

We say that a subcategory  $\mathbb{P}$  is *closed under (regular) quotients* in a category  $\mathbb{Q}$  if, for any regular epimorphism  $f : A \twoheadrightarrow B$  in  $\mathbb{Q}$  such that  $A \in \mathbb{P}$ , then  $B \in \mathbb{P}$ .

**Proposition 3.6.** *If  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category, then  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$  is a full subcategory of  $2\text{-Eq}(\mathbb{C})$ , that is closed in  $2\text{-Eq}(\mathbb{C})$  under quotients.*

*Proof:* The fullness of the forgetful functor  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C}) \rightarrow 2\text{-Eq}(\mathbb{C})$  follows from the results in [6], by taking into account the fact that any Goursat category satisfies the Shifting Property.

Let us then consider a regular epimorphism in  $2\text{-Eq}(\mathbb{C})$

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} R & \xrightleftharpoons[r_2]{r_1} & X & \xrightleftharpoons[s_2]{s_1} & S \\ f_R \downarrow & & f \downarrow & & \downarrow f_S \\ \bar{R} & \xrightleftharpoons[\bar{r}_2]{\bar{r}_1} & \bar{X} & \xrightleftharpoons[\bar{s}_2]{\bar{s}_1} & \bar{S} \end{array}$$

(this means that  $f$ ,  $f_R$  and  $f_S$  are regular epimorphisms in  $\mathbb{C}$ ) such that its domain  $(R, S, X)$  belongs to  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$ . The equalities  $f(R) = \bar{R}$  and  $f(S) = \bar{S}$ , together with Proposition 3.5, imply that there exists a connector between  $\bar{R}$  and  $\bar{S}$ . ■

**Lemma 3.7.** *Let  $\mathbb{D}$  be a finitely complete category, and  $\mathbb{C}$  a full subcategory of  $\mathbb{D}$  closed in  $\mathbb{D}$  under finite limits and quotients. Then:*

- (1)  $\mathbb{C}$  is regular whenever  $\mathbb{D}$  is regular.
- (2)  $\mathbb{D}$  is a Goursat category whenever  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category.

*Proof:* The (regular epimorphism, monomorphism) factorisation in  $\mathbb{D}$  of an arrow in  $\mathbb{C}$  is also its factorisation in  $\mathbb{C}$ , since  $\mathbb{C}$  is closed in  $\mathbb{D}$  under quotients. Since finite limits in  $\mathbb{C}$  are calculated as in  $\mathbb{D}$ , it follows that regular epimorphisms are stable under pullbacks. Now the second statement easily follows from the fact that the composition of relations is computed in the same way in  $\mathbb{C}$  and in  $\mathbb{D}$ . ■

**Theorem 3.8.** *If  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category then  $\text{Conn}(\mathbb{C})$  is a Goursat category.*

*Proof:* From Proposition 2.2 one may deduce that  $2\text{-Eq}(\mathbb{C})$  is a Goursat category. The result then follows from Proposition 3.6 and Lemma 3.7. ■

We finally prove that groupoids can be used to characterise Goursat categories. Recall that an **(internal) groupoid** in a category  $\mathbb{C}$  with pullbacks is a reflexive graph with a multiplication  $m: X_1 \times_{X_0} X_1 \rightarrow X_1$  and an inverse  $i: X_1 \rightarrow X_1$

$$X_1 \times_{X_0} X_1 \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{p_1} \\ \xrightarrow{m} \\ \xrightarrow{p_2} \end{array} X_1 \begin{array}{c} \overset{i}{\curvearrowright} \\ \xrightarrow{d} \\ \xleftarrow{c} \end{array} X_0,$$

(where  $X_1 \times_{X_0} X_1$  is the pullback of  $d$  and  $c$ ) such that:

- $d \circ m = d \circ p_2$ ,  $c \circ m = c \circ p_1$ ,  $m \circ \langle e \circ d, 1_{X_1} \rangle = 1_{X_1} = m \circ \langle 1_{X_1}, e \circ c \rangle$ ;
- $m \circ (1 \times m) = m \circ (m \times 1)$ ;

- $d \circ i = c$ ,  $c \circ i = d$ ,  $m \circ \langle i, 1_{X_1} \rangle = e \circ c$  and  $m \circ \langle 1_{X_1}, i \rangle = e \circ d$ .

We write  $\text{Grpd}(\mathbb{C})$  for the category of groupoids in  $\mathbb{C}$  and  $\text{RG}(\mathbb{C})$  for the category of internal reflexive graphs in  $\mathbb{C}$ .

**Theorem 3.9.** *Let  $\mathbb{C}$  be a regular category. Then the following conditions are equivalent:*

- $\mathbb{C}$  is a Goursat category;
- $\text{Grpd}(\mathbb{C})$  is closed in  $\text{RG}(\mathbb{C})$  under quotients.

*Proof:* (i)  $\Rightarrow$  (ii) Let

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X_1 & \xrightarrow{g} & X'_1 \\ d \downarrow \uparrow e \downarrow & & d' \downarrow \uparrow e' \downarrow \\ X_0 & \xrightarrow{f} & X'_0 \end{array}$$

be a regular epimorphism  $(f, g)$  in  $\text{RG}(\mathbb{C})$  (which means that  $f$  and  $g$  are regular epimorphisms in  $\mathbb{C}$ ), with

$$X_1 \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{d} \\ \xleftarrow{e} \\ \xrightarrow{c} \end{array} X_0$$

a groupoid in  $\mathbb{C}$ . Let  $\text{Eq}(d)$ ,  $\text{Eq}(c)$ ,  $\text{Eq}(d')$  and  $\text{Eq}(c')$  be the kernel pairs of the arrows  $d$ ,  $c$ ,  $d'$  and  $c'$ , respectively. Let  $\lambda : \text{Eq}(d) \rightarrow \text{Eq}(d')$  and  $\beta : \text{Eq}(c) \rightarrow \text{Eq}(c')$  be the arrows induced by the universal property of kernel pairs  $\text{Eq}(d')$  and  $\text{Eq}(c')$ , respectively. By Theorem 1.5,  $\lambda$  and  $\beta$  are regular epimorphisms, so that  $g(\text{Eq}(d)) = \text{Eq}(d')$  and  $g(\text{Eq}(c)) = \text{Eq}(c')$ . By Proposition 3.5 there is then a connector between  $\text{Eq}(d')$  and  $\text{Eq}(c')$ , thus

$$X'_1 \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{d'} \\ \xleftarrow{e'} \\ \xrightarrow{c'} \end{array} X'_0$$

is a groupoid (see Example 3.2 (b)).

(ii)  $\Rightarrow$  (i) This implication follows from Theorem 1.4 and the fact that equivalence relations are in particular groupoids (whose domain and co-domain morphisms are jointly monomorphic).  $\blacksquare$

**Remark 3.10.** A result analogous to Theorem 3.9 holds in the Mal'tsev context: a category  $\mathbb{C}$  is a Mal'tsev category if and only if  $\text{Grpd}(\mathbb{C})$  is closed in  $\text{RG}(\mathbb{C})$  under subobjects [3]. Together with the comments made before Proposition 3.5 we observe the existence of a sort of duality between

Mal'tsev categories and Goursat categories. Similar results hold for Mal'tsev categories with respect to monomorphisms and for Goursat categories with respect to regular epimorphisms.

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