

ON ∞ -COSMOI OF BICATEGORIES

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ABSTRACT. An ∞ -cosmos is a setting in which to develop the formal category theory of $(\infty, 1)$ -categories. In this paper, we explore a few atypical examples of ∞ -cosmoi whose objects are 2-categories or bicategories rather than $(\infty, 1)$ -categories and compare the formal category theory that is so-encoded with classical 2-category and bicategory theory. We hope this work will inform future explorations into formal $(\infty, 2)$ -category theory.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In [S74], Street introduced the notion of an *elementary cosmos*, axiomatizing the 2-categorical “universe” in which categories live as objects. Inspired by this work, Riehl and Verity developed a corresponding notion of an ∞ -*cosmos*, axiomatizing the $(\infty, 2)$ -categorical “universe” in which $(\infty, 1)$ -categories live as objects; see [RV21] summarizing a previous series of papers. The objects of an ∞ -cosmos are called “ ∞ -categories” — turning the nickname Lurie popularized in his book [Lu09] into a technical term — and the morphisms between them are called “ ∞ -functors.” Any ∞ -cosmos has a quotient 2-category, called the *homotopy 2-category*, whose objects and 1-cells are the ∞ -categories and ∞ -functors in the ∞ -cosmos and whose 2-cells then define “ ∞ -natural transformations” between them.

From the axioms of an ∞ -cosmos, Riehl and Verity define the notions of equivalences and adjunctions between its objects — that is, equivalences and adjunctions between ∞ -categories — and limits and colimits of diagrams valued inside an object of an ∞ -cosmos — that is, limits and colimits inside ∞ -categories — and prove that these recover the standard definitions from the $(\infty, 1)$ -categorical literature.

This work was supported by the NSF via DMS-1652600, by the ARO under MURI Grant W911NF-20-1-0082, and by the Johns Hopkins President’s Frontier Award program. The authors also wish to thank John Bourke, Alexander Campbell, and Dominic Verity for enlightening conversations related to this project.

They then provide new formal proofs of expected categorical theorems: for instance that right adjoints between ∞ -categories preserve limits inside those ∞ -categories. The aim of this program is to provide a “model-independent” foundation of $(\infty, 1)$ -category theory.

The axioms of an ∞ -cosmos are deliberately very minimal. Consequently, in addition to the expected examples — ∞ -cosmoi whose objects are $(\infty, 1)$ -categories in some model — there are a variety of “exotic” examples of ∞ -cosmoi. In particular, several models of $(\infty, 2)$ -categories or even (∞, n) -categories give rise to ∞ -cosmoi [RV21, §E.3], including Ara’s n -quasi-categories [A14], Rezk’s Θ_n -spaces [Re10], Barwick’s n -fold complete Segal spaces [Ba05], and Verity’s n -complicial sets [V08]. For each of these models and for each $0 \leq n < \infty$ (including $n = \infty$ in the final case), there is an ∞ -cosmos in which the “ ∞ -categories” are the (∞, n) -categories in that particular model. This suggests the tantalizing possibility that it might be possible to develop $(\infty, 2)$ -category theory or (∞, n) -category theory “model-independently” by adapting ∞ -cosmological methods.

Of course, all of the theorems proven about arbitrary ∞ -cosmoi apply to every particular example. Thus, for instance, [RV21, 2.4.2] proves that right adjoints between 2-quasi-categories preserve limits in 2-quasi-categories. What is not clear, however, is what exactly the ∞ -cosmological definitions of adjunctions between ∞ -categories or limits inside ∞ -categories compile out to in the 2-quasi-categories model.

This motivates the present paper. In addition to the ∞ -cosmoi of $(\infty, 2)$ -categories mentioned above, there are — somewhat curiously — various ∞ -cosmoi whose “ ∞ -categories” are 2-categories or bicategories and whose “ ∞ -functors” and “ ∞ -natural transformations” define some variety of functor and natural transformation between them. In §2, we develop two particularly fertile examples: the ∞ -cosmos 2-Cat of 2-categories, 2-functors, and 2-natural transformations and the ∞ -cosmos $\mathbb{I}con$ of bicategories, normal pseudofunctors, and icons.

In §3, we review the basic formal theory of ∞ -categories in an ∞ -cosmos, recalling the ∞ -cosmological definitions of equivalences between ∞ -categories, adjunctions between ∞ -categories, terminal objects in an ∞ -category, and limits in an ∞ -category. In §4 and §5, we explore each of the ∞ -cosmoi 2-Cat and $\mathbb{I}con$ in turn and describe the varieties of formal 2-category theory and bicategory theory they encode. We conclude in §6 with a proposal for further study.

2. ∞ -COSMOI OF 2-CATEGORIES AND BICATEGORIES

The informal definition of an ∞ -cosmos states that it is an “ $(\infty, 2)$ -category with $(\infty, 2)$ -categorical limits,” under a particularly strict interpretation of these terms. Firstly, an ∞ -cosmos is a simplicially-enriched category whose hom-spaces are quasi-categories, these being a model of $(\infty, 1)$ -categories. An ∞ -cosmos must then possess certain simplicially-enriched limits including a terminal object, products, and simplicial cotensors. More generally, an ∞ -cosmos possesses all simplicially-enriched limits whose weights are “flexible.”¹ These flexible weighted limits can be built inductively as countable inverse limits of towers of pullbacks of products of a

¹As noted in [RV21, 6.2.7], the term “flexible weighted limits” is a bit of a misnomer, as they are more precisely analogous to the PIE-limits in 2-category theory than the flexible ones, since splittings of idempotents are not required.

special class of maps in an ∞ -cosmos called “isofibrations.” The class of isofibrations is then required to satisfy various closure properties; see [RV21, 1.2.1] for full details.

As noted in [RV21, E.1.6], any 2-category with sufficient limits defines an ∞ -cosmos, whose homotopy 2-category of “ ∞ -categories,” “ ∞ -functors,” and “ ∞ -natural transformations” is isomorphic to the original 2-category. Morally, a 2-category defines an ∞ -cosmos just when that 2-category admits PIE-limits: products, inserters, and equifiers. However, as discussed in [RV21, E.1.6], slightly more is required. An ∞ -cosmos is required to come with a specified class of 1-cells, the above-mentioned “isofibrations.” This class must satisfy the closure properties enumerated in [RV21, 1.2.1(ii)]. In particular, the 2-category is required to admit 2-pullbacks and inverse 2-limits of towers of these maps, not merely the corresponding bilimits that can be constructed as PIE-limits.

An additional requirement of the class of isofibrations in an ∞ -cosmos is that they also define isofibrations in the homotopy 2-category, in a sense we now recall:

Definition 2.1. A 1-cell $F: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ in a 2-category defines an **isofibration** just when it possesses the lifting property for invertible 2-cells depicted below:

$$(2.2) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{A} & \mathcal{A} \\ & \cong \Downarrow \beta & \downarrow F \\ & B & \mathcal{B} \end{array} = \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{A} & \mathcal{A} \\ & \exists \cong \Downarrow \alpha & \downarrow F \\ & L & \mathcal{B} \end{array}$$

Equivalently, the isofibrations in a 2-category can be characterized as “representably-defined isofibrations.” A 1-cell $F: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ is an isofibration just when, for any object \mathcal{X} , the induced functor between the hom-categories is an isofibration of categories, with the right lifting property

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathbb{I} & \xrightarrow{A} & \mathrm{Hom}(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{A}) \\ \downarrow & \alpha \nearrow & \downarrow F \\ \mathbb{I} & \xrightarrow{\beta} & \mathrm{Hom}(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{B}) \end{array}$$

against the inclusion of either endpoint of the free-living isomorphism \mathbb{I} .

But as we shall see, the isofibrations in an ∞ -cosmos may be a smaller class than just those maps that define isofibrations in the homotopy 2-category.

2.1. 2-categories, 2-functors, and 2-natural transformations. Our first example might be thought of as an ∞ -cosmos for strict 2-category theory:

Proposition 2.3. *The 2-category 2-Cat of 2-categories, 2-functors, and 2-natural transformations defines an ∞ -cosmos whose isofibrations are the isofibrations.*

Proof. This 2-category, like any 2-category with limits and colimits, admits a “trivial model structure” due to Lack. In this model structure, the fibrations are the isofibrations and the weak equivalences are the equivalences, as defined internally to the 2-category of 2-categories [La07, 3.3] (see Definitions 2.1 and 3.1). All objects are fibrant and cofibrant. Moreover, this model structure is enriched over the folk model structure on categories. Thus we can apply [RV21, E.1.3] using the

adjunction

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \xleftarrow{\text{ho}} & \\ \text{Cat} & \perp & \text{sSet} \\ & \xrightarrow{N} & \end{array}$$

to obtain an ∞ -cosmos of 2-categories, in which the isofibrations are the isofibrations. \square

Remark 2.4. The ∞ -cosmos 2-Cat is cartesian closed as an ∞ -cosmos. It satisfies the additional axiom of [RV21, 1.2.23], which in this context amounts to the following observations:

- (i) The 2-category $\mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{A}}$ of 2-functors, 2-natural transformations, and modifications defines a right 2-adjoint to the cartesian product.
- (ii) Exponentiation preserves isofibrations.

2.2. Bicategories, normal pseudofunctors, and icons. The strict 2-functors are just one variety of homomorphisms between 2-categories or bicategories. Arguably more natural are the *pseudofunctors*, which preserve composition and identities up to coherent isomorphism, or the *normal pseudofunctors*, which preserve identities strictly and composition up to coherent isomorphism. Lack proves that either class of functors defines the 1-cells of a 2-category whose 2-cells are the *icons*, the identity-component oplax natural transformations [La10, 3.1].

Definition 2.5. For normal pseudofunctors $F, G: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ satisfying $Fx = Gx$ for all objects $x \in \mathcal{A}$, an **icon** $\alpha: F \Rightarrow G$ is given by the data of a natural transformation

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \xrightarrow{F} & \\ \mathcal{A}(x, y) & \Downarrow \alpha_{x, y} & \mathcal{B}(Fx, Fy) \\ & \xrightarrow{G} & \end{array}$$

for all $x, y \in \mathcal{A}$ satisfying two axioms:

- (i) The component of $\alpha_{x, x}$ at $\text{id}_x \in \mathcal{A}(x, x)$ is the identity 2-cell on $F(\text{id}_x) = \text{id}_{Fx} = \text{id}_{Gx} = G(\text{id}_x)$.
- (ii) For all $x, y, z \in \mathcal{A}$,

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{A}(y, z) \times \mathcal{A}(x, y) & \xrightarrow{\circ} & \mathcal{A}(x, z) & \mathcal{A}(y, z) \times \mathcal{A}(x, y) & \xrightarrow{\circ} & \mathcal{A}(x, z) \\ F \times F \left(\begin{array}{c} \alpha_{y, z} \xrightarrow{\times} \alpha_{x, y} \\ \downarrow \end{array} \right) G \times G & \cong \Rightarrow & \downarrow G & = & F \times F \left(\begin{array}{c} \alpha_{x, z} \\ \downarrow \end{array} \right) G & \cong \Rightarrow & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{B}(Fy, Fz) \times \mathcal{B}(Fx, Fy) & \xrightarrow{\circ} & \mathcal{B}(Fx, Fz) & \mathcal{B}(Fy, Fz) \times \mathcal{B}(Fx, Fy) & \xrightarrow{\circ} & \mathcal{B}(Fx, Fz) \end{array}$$

where the unlabelled isomorphisms are the coherences of the normal pseudofunctors F and G .

There are two independent choices we might make in defining a 2-category with PIE-limits whose 2-cells are icons. We can take the objects to be the 2-categories or the bicategories, and we can take the 1-cells to be the pseudofunctors or the normal pseudofunctors. In fact, all four possibilities are biequivalent [LP08]. However, while we can prove that either 2-category of bicategories defines an ∞ -cosmos, the 2-categories of 2-categories appear not to, as discussed in Remark 2.7.

Proposition 2.6. *The 2-category $\mathbb{I}con$ of bicategories, normal pseudofunctors, and icons defines an ∞ -cosmos, in which the isofibrations are the normal isofibrations.*

A **normal isofibration** is an isofibration admitting chosen lifts that are natural in \mathcal{X} and defined in such a way that the lifts of identity 2-cells are identities.

Proof. The 2-category of bicategories, normal pseudofunctors, and icons is the 2-category of strict algebras, pseudo morphisms, and algebra 2-cells for a flexible 2-monad on the 2-category of reflexive \mathbf{Cat} -graphs. As such it admits all flexible limits. By [Bo21, A.1], this 2-category then also admits 2-pullbacks of normal isofibrations, and by a similar argument, limits of towers of normal isofibrations. Thus it defines an ∞ -cosmos $\mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}$ in which the isofibrations are the normal isofibrations. \square

The 2-category of bicategories, pseudofunctors, and icons also defines an ∞ -cosmos for a similar reason; in this case the flexible 2-monad is on the category of \mathbf{Cat} -graphs. We prefer to work with normal pseudofunctors as their data is easier to enumerate. For instance, a normal pseudofunctor $b: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ is just given by the data of an object $b \in \mathcal{B}$, while a pseudofunctor $b: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ is given by an object $b \in \mathcal{B}$, an endoequivalence $i: b \rightarrow b$, and an invertible 2-cell $\beta: \mathrm{id}_b \cong i$ satisfying a coherence condition.

Remark 2.7. The full subcategory of 2-categories, normal pseudofunctors, and icons is nearly an ∞ -cosmos. One can directly verify that this 2-category has PIE-limits inherited from $\mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}$. However, the 2-pullback of a normal isofibration is a bicategory, rather than a 2-category — unless that normal isofibration happens to be *discrete*, meaning that each invertible 2-cell has a unique lift. The fact that the 2-category of 2-categories, normal pseudofunctors, and icons admits 2-pullbacks of discrete isofibrations suggests an alternate potential ∞ -cosmos structure where the isofibrations are taken to be the discrete isofibrations. Alas, when a 2-category C admits non-identity invertible 2-cells, the unique functor $C \rightarrow 1$ is not a discrete isofibration. So this class violates one of the closure axioms required of an ∞ -cosmos in [RV21, 1.2.1(ii)].

2.3. Non-examples. Many examples of ∞ -cosmoi arise as full subcategories of fibrant objects in a suitably-enriched model category with all objects cofibrant in which case the isofibrations taken to be the fibrations between fibrant objects. This was the strategy employed in the proof of Proposition 2.3. Such ∞ -cosmoi are well-behaved in the sense that the equivalences between ∞ -categories, as captured by Definition 3.1, are precisely the weak equivalences in the model structure [RV21, 1.2.13, 1.4.7]. This suggests that we might productively consider model categories of 2-categories or bicategories.

In [La02, La04], Lack describes a pair of Quillen equivalent model structures on the categories of 2-categories and 2-functors and bicategories and strict functors, respectively. These are attractive settings within which to consider the homotopy theory of 2-categories or bicategories. In each case, all objects are fibrant, and the weak equivalences are the biequivalences that respectively define 2-functors or pseudofunctors. Unfortunately, in order to extract an interesting ∞ -cosmos structure from either of these model categories we must find a compatible enrichment. By [La02, §7], the model structure for 2-categories is not cartesian monoidal, though it does define a monoidal model category with respect to the Gray tensor product. We are not aware of a strong monoidal Quillen adjunction relating this monoidal model category to the Joyal model structure on simplicial sets, and thus are unable to convert this into the required quasi-categorical enrichment by applying [RV21,

E.1.3]. The model structure for bicategories fails to be cartesian monoidal for similar reasons.

3. FORMAL CATEGORY THEORY IN AN ∞ -COSMOS

For the reader's convenience, we recall the following definitions from [RV21, Chapter 2], which develop the basic formal category theory of “ ∞ -categories,” the objects in an ∞ -cosmos. The context for the following definitions is the homotopy 2-category of ∞ -categories, ∞ -functors, and ∞ -natural transformations. Here it suffices to work in any 2-category that has a 2-terminal object 1 and is either cartesian closed or is cotensored over 1-categories.² A useful exercise for the reader is to verify that each of the definitions appearing below specializes to the standard categorical notions in the case where the 2-category is \mathbb{Cat} , the 2-category of ordinary categories, functors, and natural transformations.³

Equivalences and adjunctions between ∞ -categories are defined using the standard 2-categorical definitions.

Definition 3.1. An **equivalence** is comprised of:

- a pair of ∞ -categories \mathcal{A} and \mathcal{B} ,
- a pair of ∞ -functors $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ and $G: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$,
- and a pair of invertible ∞ -natural transformations $\beta: \text{id}_{\mathcal{B}} \cong GF$ and $\alpha: \text{id}_{\mathcal{A}} \cong FG$.

Definition 3.2. An **adjunction** is comprised of:

- a pair of ∞ -categories \mathcal{A} and \mathcal{B} ,
- a pair of ∞ -functors $U: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ and $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$,
- and a pair of ∞ -natural transformations $\eta: \text{id}_{\mathcal{B}} \Rightarrow UF$ and $\epsilon: FU \Rightarrow \text{id}_{\mathcal{A}}$, called the **unit** and **counit** respectively,

so that the triangle equalities hold:

$$\begin{array}{c} \mathcal{B} \xlongequal{\quad} \mathcal{B} \\ \begin{array}{ccc} U \nearrow & \searrow F & \Downarrow \eta \\ \mathcal{A} \xlongequal{\quad} \mathcal{A} & & \end{array} \\ \Downarrow \epsilon \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \mathcal{B} \\ \begin{array}{ccc} \nearrow U & \searrow F & \Downarrow \epsilon \\ \mathcal{A} \xlongequal{\quad} \mathcal{A} & & \end{array} \\ \Downarrow \eta \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \mathcal{B} \xlongequal{\quad} \mathcal{B} \\ \begin{array}{ccc} \searrow F & \nearrow U & \Downarrow \eta \\ \mathcal{A} \xlongequal{\quad} \mathcal{A} & & \end{array} \\ \Downarrow \epsilon \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \mathcal{B} \\ \begin{array}{ccc} \searrow F & \nearrow U & \Downarrow \eta \\ \mathcal{A} \xlongequal{\quad} \mathcal{A} & & \end{array} \\ \Downarrow \epsilon \end{array}$$

Using the 2-terminal object 1, Definition 3.2 specializes to give notions of an initial object or a terminal object inside an ∞ -category \mathcal{A} .

Definition 3.3. An **initial object** in \mathcal{A} is given by an adjunction as below-left, while a **terminal object** in \mathcal{A} is given by an adjunction as below-right:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & i & \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{\quad} & \mathcal{A} \\ & \lrcorner & \\ & t & \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{ccc} & ! & \\ 1 & \xleftarrow{\quad} & \mathcal{A} \\ & \lrcorner & \\ & t & \end{array}$$

More general limits are defined using the notion of an absolute right lifting diagram, which we now recall. Colimits are defined co-dually using absolute left lifting diagrams.

²In the examples we consider, these cotensors are defined strictly, though a weaker notion of cotensor would also suffice; see [RV21, §3.2].

³Indeed, \mathbb{Cat} is itself an ∞ -cosmos [RV21, 1.2.11].

Definition 3.4. In a 2-category, an **absolute right lifting** of a 1-cell $G: \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ through a 1-cell $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is given by a 1-cell $R: \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ and a 2-cell

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{B} & \\ R \nearrow & \Downarrow \rho & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A} \end{array}$$

so that any 2-cell as below-left factors uniquely as below-right:

$$(3.5) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{B} & \mathcal{B} \\ C \downarrow & \Downarrow \chi & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A} \end{array} = \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{B} & \mathcal{B} \\ C \downarrow & \exists! \Downarrow \zeta & \nearrow R \\ & \searrow R & \Downarrow \rho \\ \mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A} \end{array}$$

The adjective “absolute” refers to the following stability property, whose proof is left to the reader:

Lemma 3.6. *If*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{B} & \\ R \nearrow & \Downarrow \rho & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A} \end{array}$$

is an absolute right lifting of G through F , then for any $C: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$, $(RC, \rho C)$ is an absolute right lifting of GC through F . \square

For example, by a pasting diagram chase, which is left to the reader:

Lemma 3.7. *A 2-cell $\epsilon: FU \Rightarrow \text{id}_{\mathcal{A}}$ defines an absolute right lifting*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{B} & \\ U \nearrow & \Downarrow \epsilon & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{A} & \xlongequal{\quad} & \mathcal{A} \end{array}$$

if and only if it defines the counit of an adjunction $F \dashv U$. \square

For an ∞ -category \mathcal{A} in an ∞ -cosmos and an ordinary category \mathcal{J} , the simplicial cotensor with the nerve of \mathcal{J} defines the ∞ -category $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ of \mathcal{J} -shaped diagrams in \mathcal{A} . In a cartesian closed ∞ -cosmos, the exponentials $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ also define an ∞ -category of diagrams, where in this case \mathcal{J} is another ∞ -category. In either context, restriction along the unique map $!: \mathcal{J} \rightarrow 1$ defines a constant diagram functor $\Delta: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ and we say that \mathcal{A} **admits all limits of shape \mathcal{J}** just when this functor admits a right adjoint:

$$(3.8) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} & \xleftarrow{\Delta} & \mathcal{A} \\ & \perp & \\ & \lim & \end{array}$$

The counit ϵ of such an adjunction defines the data of a limit cone, which restricts to define an absolute right lifting of an individual diagram $D: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{A} & \\ \lim \nearrow & \Downarrow \epsilon & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{D} \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} & \xlongequal{\quad} \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} \end{array}$$

This motivates the following definition.

Definition 3.9. A **limit** of a \mathcal{J} -shaped diagram $D: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ is an absolute right lifting of d through the constant diagram functor $\Delta: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & & \mathcal{A} \\ & \nearrow \ell & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{D} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} \end{array}$$

Here $\ell \in \mathcal{A}$ defines the limit object, while $\lambda: \Delta\ell \Rightarrow D$ is the limit cone.

It follows from a straightforward pasting diagram chase that right adjoints between ∞ -categories preserve limits in ∞ -categories [RV21, 2.4.2].

4. THE FORMAL THEORY OF 2-CATEGORIES, 2-FUNCTORS, AND 2-NATURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

When interpreted in the 2-category 2-Cat , Definitions 3.1 and 3.2 spell out familiar notions of equivalences and adjunctions between 2-categories.

Proposition 4.1. *The following are equivalent and define what it means for a 2-functor $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ between 2-categories to be a **2-equivalence**:*

- (i) $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is an equivalence in 2-Cat .
- (ii) $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ satisfies the following pair of properties:
 - (a) F is surjective on objects up to isomorphism, and
 - (b) the induced functor $F: \mathcal{B}(x, y) \rightarrow \mathcal{A}(Fx, Fy)$ is an isomorphism of categories for all $x, y \in \mathcal{B}$. \square

Proposition 4.2. *The following are equivalent and define a **2-adjunction**:*

- (i) A pair of 2-functors $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ and $U: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ between 2-categories form an adjunction $F \dashv U$ in 2-Cat with unit η and counit ϵ .
- (ii) The 2-natural transformations defined by composition with η and ϵ

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \xrightarrow{U(-) \cdot \eta} & \\ \mathcal{A}(Fb, a) & \cong & \mathcal{B}(b, Ua) \\ & \xleftarrow{\epsilon \cdot F(-)} & \end{array}$$

define inverse isomorphisms of hom-categories for all $a \in \mathcal{A}$ and $b \in \mathcal{B}$.

We seek analogous characterizations of the terminal objects, absolute right lifting diagrams, and limits in 2-Cat .

4.1. Terminal objects. We now explain what it means for a 2-category to admit a terminal object in the sense of Definition 3.3.

Proposition 4.3. *The following are equivalent and define what it means for a 2-category \mathcal{A} to admit a **2-terminal object** t :*

- (i) The unique 2-functor $!: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow 1$ admits a right adjoint $t: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ in 2-Cat .
- (ii) For each $a \in \mathcal{A}$, there is a unique 1-cell $a \rightarrow t$ admitting only identity endomorphisms.

Proof. By Proposition 4.2 the adjunctions in $2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat}$ are exactly the 2-adjunctions. There is a 2-adjunction $! \dashv t$ if and only if there is an object $t \in \mathcal{A}$ equipped with a 2-natural isomorphism of hom-categories

$$\mathbb{1} \cong \mathcal{A}(a, t)$$

for all $a \in \mathcal{A}$. Thus we see that terminal objects are precisely the 2-terminal objects from 2-category theory. \square

4.2. Absolute right lifting diagrams. By Lemma 3.7, the counit of any adjunction $F \dashv U$ in $2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat}$ defines an absolute right lifting diagram in $2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat}$. In fact, this absolute right lifting diagram necessarily satisfies a stronger universal property that is expressible because $2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat}$ underlies a strict 3-category whose 3-cells are the modifications.

Definition 4.4. For 2-categories \mathcal{A} , \mathcal{B} , and \mathcal{C} ; 2-functors $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$, $G: \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$, and $R: \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$; and a 2-natural transformation $\rho: FR \Rightarrow G$ as below

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{B} & \\ & \downarrow F & \\ \mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{R} & \mathcal{A} \\ & \downarrow \rho & \\ & \mathcal{A} & \\ & \uparrow G & \end{array}$$

we say that (R, ρ) defines an **enriched absolute right lifting diagram** if for all 2-categories \mathcal{X} and 2-functors $B: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ and $C: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$ the mapping

$$\mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{X}}(B, RC) \xrightarrow[\cong]{\rho \cdot F(-)} \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{X}}(FB, GC)$$

defines an isomorphism of categories.

This means that

- (i) there is a bijection between 2-natural transformations $\zeta: B \Rightarrow RC$ and $\chi: FB \Rightarrow GC$ implemented by pasting with ρ as in (3.5), and
- (ii) the above bijection extends to a bijection between modifications $\Phi: \zeta \Rightarrow \zeta'$ and $\Psi: \chi \Rightarrow \chi'$.

The bijection on objects captures precisely the universal property of absolute right lifting diagrams in $2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat}$, so enriched absolute right liftings are in particular absolute right liftings in $2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat}$. In the present context, Lemma 3.7 extends as follows:

Lemma 4.5. *A 2-cell $\epsilon: FU \Rightarrow \text{id}_{\mathcal{A}}$ defines the counit of a 2-adjunction iff the pair (U, ϵ) defines an enriched absolute right lifting diagram.*

Proof. For any 2-category \mathcal{X} , the 2-functor $(-)^{\mathcal{X}}: 2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat} \rightarrow 2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat}$ preserves adjunctions, carrying a 2-adjunction $F \dashv U$ to the 2-adjunction whose corresponding 2-functors are defined by post-composition and post-whiskering:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{X}} & \xrightarrow{F_*} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{X}} \\ & \downarrow \perp & \\ \mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{X}} & \xleftarrow{U_*} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{X}} \end{array}$$

The counit $\epsilon_*: F_*U_* \Rightarrow \text{id}_{\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{X}}}$ of this 2-adjunction is similarly defined by post-composition. For each 2-functor $A: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$, the component of ϵ_* at A is ϵA .

By Proposition 4.2, this second 2-adjunction induces an isomorphism of categories

$$(4.6) \quad \mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{X}}(B, UA) \xrightarrow[\cong]{\epsilon \cdot F(-)} \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{X}}(FB, A)$$

for any 2-functors $A: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ and $B: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$. This isomorphism is the universal property of the enriched absolute right lifting diagram (U, ϵ) .

Conversely, if (U, ϵ) defines an enriched absolute right lifting, then the 2-natural map $\epsilon \cdot F(-): \mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{X}}(B, UA) \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{X}}(FB, A)$ defines an isomorphism of categories for $A \in \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{X}}$ and $B \in \mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{X}}$. When $\mathcal{X} = 1$, this property asserts that F is left 2-adjoint to U . \square

However, a 2-natural transformation may define an absolute right lifting diagram without also defining an enriched absolute right lifting diagram:

Example 4.7. For any 2-category \mathcal{A} and $a \in \mathcal{A}$, the identity 2-cell

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{A}_{0,1} & \\ & \nearrow a & \downarrow I \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{a} & \mathcal{A} \end{array}$$

defines an absolute right lifting of $a: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ through the inclusion of the full sub 1-category $I: \mathcal{A}_{0,1} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{A}$ that contains all of the objects and 1-cells but only identity 2-cells. However, if \mathcal{A} contains a non-identity 2-cell

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & f & \\ x & \xrightarrow{\quad} & a \\ & \Downarrow \alpha & \\ & g & \end{array}$$

with codomain a , then α defines an arrow in the hom-category $\mathcal{A}(Ix, a)$ that does not lift to $\mathcal{A}_{0,1}(x, a)$. Thus this absolute right lifting diagram in 2-Cat is not an enriched absolute right lifting diagram.

4.3. Limits. Since 2-Cat is cartesian closed, a 2-functor $D: \mathcal{J} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ defines a map $D: \mathbb{1} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$. Inspired by the results of the previous sections, our aim in this section is to compare the universal property expressed by an absolute right lifting diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{A} & \\ & \nearrow \ell & \downarrow \Delta \\ \mathbb{1} & \xrightarrow{D} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} \end{array}$$

in 2-Cat with the notion of a 2-limit.

Definition 4.8. A pair (ℓ, λ) defines a **2-limit** of the diagram $D: \mathcal{J} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ just when the 2-natural transformation

$$\lambda \cdot \Delta(-): \mathcal{A}(a, \ell) \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}(\Delta a, D)$$

defines an isomorphism of hom-categories for every $a \in \mathcal{A}$.

Example 4.9. If \mathcal{A} admits all \mathcal{J} -shaped limits, in the sense of the 2-adjunction $\Delta \dashv \lim$ of (3.8), then for any $D \in \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ the component $(\lim D, \epsilon_D)$ defines a 2-limit with the 2-natural isomorphism of Definition 4.8 given by adjoint transposition.

By Lemma 4.5, if \mathcal{A} admits all \mathcal{J} -shaped limits, then as observed in Example 4.9 these are 2-limits. They define enriched absolute right lifting diagrams and thus satisfy the ∞ -categorical criterion of Definition 3.9. In fact, the general notion of 2-limit is precisely captured by enriched absolute right lifting diagrams.

Proposition 4.10. *A 2-natural transformation $\lambda: \Delta\ell \Rightarrow D$ defines a 2-limit if and only if (ℓ, λ) defines an enriched absolute right lifting of D through Δ .*

Proof. When $\mathcal{X} = 1$, the universal property of an enriched absolute right lifting (ℓ, λ) specializes to the universal property of a 2-limit $\lambda: \Delta\ell \Rightarrow D$. It remains to show that the universal property of a 2-limit defines an enriched absolute right lifting. To that end, we first establish a bijection between 2-cells of the form

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{A} & \mathcal{A} \\ \downarrow ! & \Downarrow \chi & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{D} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} \end{array} = \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{A} & \mathcal{A} \\ \downarrow ! & \nearrow \exists! \Downarrow \zeta & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{D} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} \end{array}$$

Given a 2-natural transformation $\chi: \Delta A \Rightarrow D!$ and $x \in \mathcal{X}$ we define a 1-cell $\zeta_x: Ax \rightarrow \ell$ in \mathcal{A} to be the unique 1-cell corresponding to $\chi_x: \Delta Ax \rightarrow D$ under the isomorphism

$$(4.11) \quad \mathcal{A}(Ax, \ell) \xrightarrow[\cong]{\lambda \cdot \Delta(-)} \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}(\Delta Ax, D).$$

Since χ and the isomorphism (4.11) are 2-natural, these components ζ_x assemble into a 2-natural transformation $\zeta: A \Rightarrow \ell!$. Since a 2-natural transformation is determined by its components, ζ is clearly the unique factorization of χ through λ .

We now use the fact that (4.11) is a 2-natural isomorphism of categories, rather than a natural isomorphism of sets, to extend this bijective correspondence to modifications $\Phi: \zeta \Rightarrow \zeta'$ and $\Psi: \chi \Rightarrow \chi'$ where $\chi = \lambda! \cdot \Delta\zeta$ and $\chi' = \lambda! \cdot \Delta\zeta'$. The component of a modification $\Psi: \chi \Rightarrow \chi'$ at $x \in \mathcal{X}$ is given by a 2-cell $\Psi_x: \chi_x \Rightarrow \chi'_x$ in $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$, defining an arrow in the right-hand hom-category of (4.11). Thus we define $\Phi_x: \zeta_x \Rightarrow \zeta'_x$ to be the corresponding arrow in the left-hand hom-category. The final task is to show that these 2-cells assemble into a modification $\Phi: \zeta \Rightarrow \zeta'$, which is again a consequence of the 2-naturality of (4.11) in $x \in \mathcal{X}$ and the fact that Ψ defines a modification. \square

However, if (ℓ, λ) defines a mere absolute right lifting diagram in $2\text{-}\mathbf{Cat}$ rather than an *enriched* absolute right lifting diagram, this data defines an unenriched limit but not necessarily an enriched limit, as we now illustrate.

Example 4.12. Consider the 2-category \mathcal{A} depicted below:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} & \ell & & r & \\ a & \xleftarrow{\quad} & p & \xrightarrow{\quad} & b \\ & \Downarrow \alpha & & \Downarrow \beta & \\ & \ell & & r & \end{array}$$

with three objects and two non-identity arrows, each of which admits a non-identity endomorphism. The object p defines the product of a and b but this product is not a 2-product, since the 1-cell id_p does not admit any endomorphisms.

We claim, however, that

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & & \mathcal{A} \\ & \nearrow p & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{(a,b)} & \mathcal{A} \times \mathcal{A} \end{array} \quad \Downarrow (\ell, r)$$

is an absolute right lifting diagram in 2-Cat . To see this, first observe that there is a unique functor $A: \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ admitting a 2-natural transformation

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{A} & \mathcal{A} \\ ! \downarrow & \Downarrow \chi & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{(a,b)} & \mathcal{A} \times \mathcal{A}. \end{array}$$

The component of χ at $x \in \mathcal{X}$ is given by a pair of 1-cells in \mathcal{A} from Ax to a and to b , and such 1-cells only exist if $Ax = p$. Since p admits no endomorphic 1-cells or 2-cells, this tells us that the 2-functor A is necessarily constant at p , in which case the only 2-natural transformation χ is constant at the pair of 1-cells (ℓ, r) . So the universal property of the absolute right lifting diagram need only be checked in a single case, for which we have the unique factorization:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{x!} & \mathcal{A} \\ ! \downarrow & \Downarrow (\ell, r) & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{(a,b)} & \mathcal{A} \times \mathcal{A} \end{array} = \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{x!} & \mathcal{A} \\ ! \downarrow & \Downarrow \exists! \downarrow \text{id} & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{(a,b)} & \mathcal{A} \times \mathcal{A} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \nearrow p \\ \Downarrow (\ell, r) \end{array}$$

There is another hint that Definition 3.9 does not specialize to the notion of 2-limit in 2-Cat . In any ∞ -cosmos, a limit (ℓ, λ) of a diagram $D: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ may be characterized as a terminal object in the ∞ -category $\text{Hom}_{\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}}(\Delta, D)$ defined by the pullback

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{Hom}_{\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}}(\Delta, D) & \longrightarrow & (\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}})^2 \\ \downarrow & \lrcorner & \downarrow (\text{cod}, \text{dom}) \\ 1 \times \mathcal{A} & \xrightarrow{D \times \Delta} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} \times \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}. \end{array}$$

In the ∞ -cosmos 2-Cat , this is the “strict slice 2-category” considered by clingman and Moser [cM20, 2.7]. While they show that any 2-limit defines a 2-terminal object in the 2-category $\text{Hom}_{\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}}(\Delta, D)$, they prove that 2-terminal objects need not necessarily define 2-limits [cM20, 2.11-12].

5. THE FORMAL THEORY OF BICATEGORIES, NORMAL PSEUDOFUNCTORS, AND ICONS

We now turn our attention to the ∞ -cosmos $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$ of bicategories, normal pseudofunctors, and icons. The equivalences in the sense of Definition 3.1 are characterized by an observation of Lack in [La10].

Proposition 5.1. *For a normal pseudofunctor $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ between bicategories, the following are equivalent:*

- (i) $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is an equivalence in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$.
- (ii) $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ satisfies the following pair of properties:
 - (a) F is bijective on objects, and

(b) the induced functor $F: \mathcal{B}(x, y) \rightarrow \mathcal{A}(Fx, Fy)$ is an equivalence of categories for all $x, y \in \mathcal{B}$. \square

In this section, we seek analogous characterizations of the adjunctions, terminal objects, and limits in this 2-category.

5.1. Adjunctions. Suppose $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is left adjoint to $U: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$. Then by the presence of the unit and counit icons $\eta: \text{id}_{\mathcal{B}} \Rightarrow UF$ and $\epsilon: FU \Rightarrow \text{id}_{\mathcal{A}}$, the maps F and U must necessarily define an inverse isomorphism between $\text{ob}\mathcal{A}$ and $\text{ob}\mathcal{B}$. Now the hom-category actions of F and U define functors

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & F & \\ \mathcal{B}(b, Ua) & \xrightarrow{\quad} & \mathcal{A}(Fb, a) \\ & U & \end{array}$$

for each $b \in \mathcal{B}$ and $a \in \mathcal{A}$, giving rise to the following characterization of adjunctions in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$.

Proposition 5.2. *The following are equivalent:*

- (i) *An adjunction $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ and $U: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$ with $F \dashv U$.*
- (ii) *An inverse isomorphism $F: \text{ob}\mathcal{B} \cong \text{ob}\mathcal{A}$, $U: \text{ob}\mathcal{A} \cong \text{ob}\mathcal{B}$ together with a local adjunction*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & F & \\ \mathcal{B}(b, Ua) & \xrightarrow{\quad} & \mathcal{A}(Fb, a) \\ & \perp & \\ & U & \end{array}$$

for all $a \in \mathcal{A}$ and $b \in \mathcal{B}$.

We prove this result as a special case of a more general result appearing in Proposition 5.4; see Observation 5.7.

5.2. Terminal objects. We now interpret Definition 3.3 in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$.

Proposition 5.3. *A bicategory \mathcal{A} admits a terminal object $t: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ defining a right adjoint to the unique normal pseudofunctor $!: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow 1$ if and only if:*

- (i) *The bicategory \mathcal{A} has a single object t .*
- (ii) *The identity 1-cell $\text{id}_t \in \mathcal{A}(t, t)$ is terminal in the unique hom-category of \mathcal{A} .*

Recall a 1-object bicategory is equally a monoidal category. Proposition 5.3 says that a monoidal category, regarded as a 1-object bicategory, admits a terminal object in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$ if and only if it is **semi-cartesian**, meaning its monoidal unit is a terminal object.

Proof. Unpacking Definition 3.3, a terminal object in a bicategory \mathcal{A} in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$ is given by an adjunction

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & ! & \\ \mathcal{A} & \xrightarrow{\quad} & 1 \\ & \perp & \\ & t & \end{array}$$

involving the terminal 2-category 1 . By Proposition 5.2, this tells us in particular that \mathcal{A} must be a 1-object bicategory, so $t: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is the unique object in \mathcal{A} .

The remaining data defines a local adjunction

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \xrightarrow{!} & \\ \mathcal{A}(t, t) & \perp & 1(*, *) \\ & \xleftarrow{t} & \end{array}$$

involving the unique hom-category of \mathcal{A} and the terminal category $1(*, *) \cong \mathbb{1}$. Since $t: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is a normal pseudofunctor, the local right adjoint $t: \mathbb{1} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}(t, t)$ picks out the identity 1-cell on t . The adjointness tells us that the 1-cell $\text{id}_t \in \mathcal{A}(t, t)$ is terminal, i.e., for all $f: t \rightarrow t$ there exists a unique 2-cell $\eta_f: f \Rightarrow \text{id}_t$ in \mathcal{A} . \square

5.3. Absolute right lifting diagrams. We now consider an absolute right lifting diagram in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{B} & \\ R \nearrow & & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A} \\ & \Downarrow \rho & \end{array}$$

Proposition 5.4. *The following are equivalent:*

- (i) *The pair (R, ρ) defines absolute right lifting of $G: \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ through $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$.*
- (ii) *The normal pseudofunctors R , G , and F give rise to a pullback diagram of object functions*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{ob}\mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{R} & \text{ob}\mathcal{B} \\ \parallel & \lrcorner & \downarrow F \\ \text{ob}\mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \text{ob}\mathcal{A} \end{array}$$

and for all $x, y \in \mathcal{C}$, the induced diagram of hom-categories

$$(5.5) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} & \mathcal{B}(Rx, Ry) & \\ R \nearrow & & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C}(x, y) & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A}(Gx, Gy) = \mathcal{A}(FRx, FRy) \\ & \Downarrow \rho_{x, y} & \end{array}$$

is an absolute right lifting diagram in $\mathbb{C}\text{at}$.

Our proof of Proposition 5.4 makes use of the following lemma.

Lemma 5.6. *There is a 2-adjunction*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \Sigma & \\ \mathbb{1} + \mathbb{1} / \mathbb{I}\text{con} & \perp & \mathbb{C}\text{at} \\ & \text{Hom} & \end{array}$$

between the 2-category of bicategories with a chosen pair of objects, basepoint-preserving normal pseudofunctors, and icons and the 2-category of categories whose right adjoint carries a bipointed bicategory (\mathcal{C}, x, y) to the hom-category $\mathcal{C}(x, y)$.

Proof. The left 2-adjoint is the fully faithful 2-functor that carries a category J to the 2-category with two objects 0 and 1 and whose hom-categories are given by

$$\Sigma J(0, 1) := J, \quad \Sigma J(0, 0) := \Sigma J(1, 1) := \mathbb{1}, \quad \text{and} \quad \Sigma J(1, 0) := \emptyset.$$

The component of the counit at (\mathcal{C}, x, y) is given by the canonical normal pseudo-functor $\Sigma\mathcal{C}(x, y) \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$. We leave the verification of the 2-adjointness of this construction to the reader. \square

Proof of Proposition 5.4. First assume that (R, ρ) defines an absolute right lifting of G through F , which implies in particular that the 2-functors FR and G agree on objects.

Observe that there exists an icon $1 \begin{smallmatrix} \xrightarrow{x} \\ \Downarrow \alpha \\ \xrightarrow{y} \end{smallmatrix} \mathcal{A}$ if and only if $x = y$ as objects

of \mathcal{A} , in which case there is a unique icon from x to y (the identity icon). The universal property of absolute right lifting diagrams specializes to give a bijection between icons as below-left and as below-right

$$\begin{array}{ccc} 1 & \xrightarrow{b} & \mathcal{B} \\ c \downarrow & \Downarrow \chi & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A} \end{array} \quad \rightsquigarrow \quad \begin{array}{ccc} 1 & \xrightarrow{b} & \mathcal{B} \\ c \downarrow & \Downarrow \zeta & \nearrow R \\ \mathcal{C} & & \end{array}$$

implemented by pasting with ρ . The former stand in bijection with pairs of objects (b, c) so that $Fb = Gc$, while the latter stand in bijection with objects of \mathcal{C} . Thus we see that if (R, ρ) is absolute right lifting, then the square

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{ob}\mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{R} & \text{ob}\mathcal{B} \\ \parallel & \lrcorner & \downarrow F \\ \text{ob}\mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \text{ob}\mathcal{A} \end{array}$$

is a pullback.

Now let $x, y \in \mathcal{C}$. Since the forgetful 2-functor $\mathbb{1}^{+1}/\mathbb{I}\text{con} \rightarrow \mathbb{I}\text{con}$ is locally fully faithful, the absolute right lifting diagram (R, ρ) lifts to define an absolute right lifting diagram in $\mathbb{1}^{+1}/\mathbb{I}\text{con}$ starting from the object (\mathcal{C}, x, y) . Right 2-adjoints preserve absolute right lifting diagrams, so it follows that (5.5) defines an absolute right lifting diagram in $\mathbb{C}\text{at}$ as claimed.

For the converse, consider an icon

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X} & \xrightarrow{B} & \mathcal{B} \\ C \downarrow & \Downarrow \chi & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C} & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A} \end{array}$$

The presence of the icon χ demands that FB and GC agree on objects. It follows from the pullback given in (ii) that B and RC agree on objects as well, which means it is possible to define an icon between these functors.

We use the remaining condition of (ii) to specify the data of such an icon. For any $x, y \in \mathcal{X}$, the given absolute right lifting in $\mathbb{C}\text{at}$ factors the component of the icon χ at x, y as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X}(x, y) & \xrightarrow{B} & \mathcal{B}(Bx, By) \\ C \downarrow & \Downarrow \chi_{x, y} & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C}(Cx, Cy) & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A}(FBx, FBy) \end{array} = \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{X}(x, y) & \xrightarrow{B} & \mathcal{B}(Bx, By) \\ C \downarrow & \nearrow \exists! \Downarrow \zeta_{x, y} & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{C}(Cx, Cy) & \xrightarrow{G} & \mathcal{A}(FBx, FBy) \end{array}$$

We claim that this defines the component at $x, y \in \mathcal{X}$ of an icon ζ in the sense of Definition 2.5. Since icons are determined entirely by their components, it will follow immediately that $\chi = \rho C \cdot F\zeta$ and that this is the unique such factorization, proving that (R, ρ) is absolute right lifting in \mathbb{Icon} .

To see that the components $\zeta_{x,y}$ assemble into an icon observe first that since χ and ρ are icons, for each $x \in \mathcal{X}$ their components at identity 1-cells define identity natural transformations in \mathbb{Cat} . The defining factorization property tells us that $\zeta_{x,x}$ also has its component at 1_x given by the identity natural transformation. This verifies the unit property.

The final icon condition requires us to verify the pasting equality

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \mathcal{X}(y, z) \times \mathcal{X}(x, y) & \xrightarrow{B \times B} & \mathcal{B}(By, Bz) \times \mathcal{B}(Bx, By) \\
 \downarrow C \times C & \searrow \circ & \downarrow \cong \\
 \mathcal{C}(Cy, Cz) \times \mathcal{C}(Cx, Cy) & \xrightarrow{\cong} & \mathcal{X}(x, z) \\
 \downarrow C & \searrow \circ & \downarrow C \\
 \mathcal{C}(Cx, Cz) & \xrightarrow{R} & \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz)
 \end{array}
 \quad \begin{array}{c}
 \xrightarrow{B \times B} \\
 \xrightarrow{\cong} \\
 \xrightarrow{B} \\
 \xrightarrow{\Downarrow \zeta_{x,z}} \\
 \xrightarrow{R}
 \end{array}
 \quad \begin{array}{c}
 \circ \\
 \circ \\
 \circ \\
 \circ \\
 \circ
 \end{array}
 \quad \begin{array}{c}
 \mathcal{B}(By, Bz) \times \mathcal{B}(Bx, By) \\
 \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz) \\
 \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz) \\
 \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz) \\
 \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz)
 \end{array}
 \quad =$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \mathcal{X}(y, z) \times \mathcal{X}(x, y) & \xrightarrow{B \times B} & \mathcal{B}(By, Bz) \times \mathcal{B}(Bx, By) \\
 \downarrow C \times C & \searrow \Downarrow \zeta_{y,z} \times \zeta_{x,y} & \downarrow \circ \\
 \mathcal{C}(Cy, Cz) \times \mathcal{C}(Cx, Cy) & \xrightarrow{R \times R} & \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz) \\
 \downarrow C & \searrow \circ & \downarrow C \\
 \mathcal{C}(Cx, Cz) & \xrightarrow{R} & \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz)
 \end{array}
 \quad \begin{array}{c}
 \xrightarrow{B \times B} \\
 \xrightarrow{\Downarrow \zeta_{y,z} \times \zeta_{x,y}} \\
 \xrightarrow{R \times R} \\
 \xrightarrow{\cong} \\
 \xrightarrow{R}
 \end{array}
 \quad \begin{array}{c}
 \circ \\
 \circ \\
 \circ \\
 \circ \\
 \circ
 \end{array}
 \quad \begin{array}{c}
 \mathcal{B}(By, Bz) \times \mathcal{B}(Bx, By) \\
 \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz) \\
 \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz) \\
 \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz) \\
 \mathcal{B}(Bx, Bz)
 \end{array}$$

for any $x, y, z \in \mathcal{X}$, where the unlabelled isomorphisms are the coherences of the normal pseudofunctors B , C , and R . By the universal property of the absolute right lifting diagrams in \mathbb{Cat} it suffices to verify this equality after pasting with $\rho_{Cx, Cz}$. At this point, the required pasting equality reduces to the corresponding icon condition for χ . \square

Observation 5.7. Proposition 5.2 can be deduced as a special case of Lemma 5.4 via Lemma 3.7. An icon $\epsilon: FU \Rightarrow \text{id}_{\mathcal{A}}$ defines the counit of an adjunction if and only if it defines an absolute right lifting, which we have just shown is the case if and only if

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \text{ob} \mathcal{A} & \xrightarrow{U} & \text{ob} \mathcal{B} \\
 \parallel & \lrcorner & \downarrow F \\
 \text{ob} \mathcal{A} & \xlongequal{\quad} & \text{ob} \mathcal{A}
 \end{array}$$

is a pullback and for all $z, a \in \mathcal{A}$,

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 & & \mathcal{B}(Uz, Ua) \\
 & \nearrow U & \downarrow F \\
 \mathcal{A}(z, a) & \xlongequal{\quad} & \mathcal{A}(z, a)
 \end{array}$$

is an absolute right lifting diagram of categories. The former property holds if and only if $F: \text{ob} \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \text{ob} \mathcal{A}$ and $U: \text{ob} \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \text{ob} \mathcal{B}$ define an inverse isomorphism. In

particular, we may replace $z \in \mathcal{A}$ by the unique $b \in \mathcal{B}$ so that $Fb = z$. By Lemma 3.7 again,

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & & \mathcal{B}(b, Ua) \\ & \nearrow U & \downarrow F \\ \mathcal{A}(Fb, a) & \xlongequal{\quad} & \mathcal{A}(Fb, a) \end{array}$$

defines an absolute right lifting if and only if ϵ is the counit of an adjunction

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \xrightarrow{F} & \\ \mathcal{B}(b, Ua) & \perp & \mathcal{A}(Fb, a) \\ & \xleftarrow{U} & \end{array}$$

5.4. Limits. While the 1-category of bicategories and normal pseudofunctors is cartesian closed, the 2-category of bicategories, normal pseudofunctors, and icons is not cartesian closed as a 2-category. A parallel pair of normal pseudofunctors $F, G: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ may admit a (non-identity) icon between them, but the transposed normal pseudofunctors $F, G: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{A}}$ only admit an icon between them when $F = G$, in which case the only icon is the identity.

However, since the 2-category $\mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}$ has PIE-limits, it necessarily also has cotensors by any 1-category. The cotensor of a bicategory \mathcal{A} with a 1-category \mathcal{J} is the bicategory $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ characterized by the natural isomorphism of categories

$$\mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}) \cong \mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{A})^{\mathcal{J}}.$$

By substituting the free 0-cell 1, free 1-cell C_1 , and free 2-cell C_2 for \mathcal{X} , we can describe the bicategory $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$.

Observation 5.8. For a 1-category \mathcal{J} and bicategory \mathcal{A} :

- Objects in $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ correspond to functors $\mathcal{J} \rightarrow \mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}(1, \mathcal{A})$. Since the hom-category $\mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}(1, \mathcal{A})$ is isomorphic to the discrete category on the set of objects of \mathcal{A} , the objects in $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ can also be understood as functions $\pi_0 \mathcal{J} \rightarrow \text{ob} \mathcal{A}$ from the set of path components of \mathcal{J} to the set of objects of \mathcal{A} .
- 1-cells in $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ correspond to functors $\mathcal{J} \rightarrow \mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}(C_1, \mathcal{A})$. These in turn can be understood via the isomorphism

$$\mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}(C_1, \mathcal{A}) \cong \coprod_{x, y \in \mathcal{A}} \mathcal{A}(x, y).$$

The source and target of a 1-cell $\phi: S \rightarrow T$ in $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ are, of course, objects in $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$, these being given by functions $S, T: \pi_0 \mathcal{J} \rightarrow \text{ob} \mathcal{A}$. The rest of the data of the 1-cell ϕ is then given by a “dependent functor” that sends each $j \in \mathcal{J}$ to a 1-cell in $\mathcal{A}(Sj, Tj)$ and a morphism $f: j \rightarrow k \in \mathcal{J}$ to a 2-cell between such 1-cells; note that since j and k belong to the same path component, $Sj = Sk$ and $Tj = Tk$.

- 2-cells in $\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ correspond to functors $\mathcal{J} \rightarrow \mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}(C_2, \mathcal{A})$, which can be understood via the isomorphism

$$\mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}(C_2, \mathcal{A}) \cong \coprod_{x, y \in \mathcal{A}} \mathcal{A}(x, y)^2.$$

We use Proposition 5.4 to describe limits in $\mathbb{I}\mathbf{con}$ of 1-category indexed diagrams valued in a bicategory. By Observation 5.8, a “diagram” $D: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ is given by a

function $D: \pi_0 \mathcal{J} \rightarrow \text{ob} \mathcal{A}$. Thus the diagrams considered in this context are rather degenerate.

Proposition 5.9. *A diagram $D: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$ admits a limit if and only if*

- (i) *the diagram D is constant at some object $\ell \in \mathcal{A}$, and*
- (ii) *$\text{id}_{\ell} \in \mathcal{A}(\ell, \ell)$ is the limit of the constant \mathcal{J} -shaped diagram in $\mathcal{A}(\ell, \ell)$ at this object, with the identity natural transformation defining the limit cone.*

Proof. If $D: 1 \rightarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ admits a limit, then it must admit a limit cone, this being an icon

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & & \mathcal{A} \\ & \nearrow \ell & \downarrow \Delta \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{D} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}} \end{array}$$

As observed above, such icons exist if and only if $\Delta \ell = D$. This tells us that D must be the constant diagram at the object ℓ , in which case the icon λ is necessarily the identity icon.

It remains to describe conditions that make $(\ell, \text{id}_{\Delta \ell})$ an absolute right lifting of the constant diagram $D = \Delta \ell$ through Δ . By Proposition 5.4, $(\ell, \text{id}_{\Delta \ell})$ defines an absolute right lifting in $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$ if and only if the induced object functions define a pullback diagram — which is automatic in this case since $\Delta: \text{ob} \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \text{ob} \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}$ is a monomorphism — and if the diagram of categories

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & & \mathcal{A}(\ell, \ell) \\ & \nearrow \text{id}_{\ell} & \downarrow \text{id} \\ 1 & \xrightarrow{\text{id}_{\ell}} & \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{J}}(\Delta \ell, \Delta \ell) \cong \mathcal{A}(\ell, \ell)^{\mathcal{J}} \end{array}$$

is an absolute right lifting diagram where the isomorphism in the lower-right corner is a consequence of Observation 5.8. Thus we see that a constant diagram $D = \Delta \ell$ admits a limit if and only if the identity cone defines a limit for the object id_{ℓ} in the hom-category $\mathcal{A}(\ell, \ell)$. \square

The conditions of Proposition 5.9 are satisfied in particular if either:

- (i) \mathcal{J} has a single path component, or
- (ii) $\text{id}_{\ell} \in \mathcal{A}(\ell, \ell)$ is terminal.

We do not know whether there are any contexts in which the notion of limit captured by this result is of interest.

6. ANOTHER ∞ -COSMOS OF BICATEGORIES

The most general notion of sameness between 2-categories or bicategories is not captured by either of the ∞ -cosmoi 2-Cat or $\mathbb{I}\text{con}$. A normal pseudofunctor $F: \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is a **biequivalence** just when

- (i) F is surjective on objects up to isomorphism, and
- (ii) the induced functor $F: \mathcal{B}(x, y) \rightarrow \mathcal{A}(Fx, Fy)$ is an equivalence of categories for all $x, y \in \mathcal{B}$,

combining the weaker of the two properties captured by the equivalences in Propositions 4.1 and 5.1. In this section, we establish another ∞ -cosmos of bicategories whose equivalences are the biequivalences, proving a conjecture of Alexander Campbell by relying heavily on his work.

Recall Joyal's category $\Theta_2 \subset 2\text{-Cat}$ spanned by the 2-categories $[n; m_1, \dots, m_n]$ that are free on n columns of m_i vertically composable cells. Presheaves on Θ_2 define Θ_2 -sets. Certain Θ_2 -sets, characterized by a right lifting property first introduced by Ara [A14] and later refined by Oury [O10] and Maehara [Ma20], define the 2-quasi-categories, a model of $(\infty, 2)$ -categories.

Moreover by [Ca20, 3.18], there is a fully faithful “homotopy coherent cellular nerve functor” $N: \mathbb{B}\text{icat} \rightarrow \text{Set}^{\Theta_2^{\text{op}}}$ (originally due to Leinster) defined by the full embedding $\Theta_2 \hookrightarrow 2\text{-Cat} \hookrightarrow \mathbb{B}\text{icat}$ into the category of bicategories and normal pseudofunctors. Explicitly, a cell $B: \Theta_2[n; \vec{m}] \rightarrow N\mathcal{B}$ in the nerve of a bicategory \mathcal{B} corresponds to a normal pseudofunctor $B: [n; \vec{m}] \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$. Unlike the stricter version of the nerve functor $N_s: 2\text{-Cat} \rightarrow \text{Set}^{\Theta_2^{\text{op}}}$ defined by the full embedding $\Theta_2 \hookrightarrow 2\text{-Cat}$, in which cells $C: \Theta_2[n; \vec{m}] \rightarrow N_s C$ correspond to 2-functors $C: [n; \vec{m}] \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$, the image of the homotopy coherent cellular nerve lands in the full subcategory of 2-quasi-categories [Ca20, 5.13].

Recall also that the category of bicategories and normal pseudofunctors is cartesian closed, as is the category of 2-quasi-categories. Campbell constructs a left adjoint to the full inclusion

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & \xleftarrow{\text{Ho}} & \\ \mathbb{B}\text{icat} & \perp & 2\text{-qCat} \\ & \xrightarrow{N} & \end{array}$$

and proves that both adjoints preserve binary products [Ca20, 6.27, 6.29]. It follows that the right adjoint preserves exponentials — for $\mathcal{A}, \mathcal{B} \in \mathbb{B}\text{icat}$, $N(\mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{A}}) \cong N\mathcal{B}^{N\mathcal{A}}$ — and more generally that $N(\mathcal{B}^{\text{Ho}X}) \cong N\mathcal{B}^X$ for any bicategory \mathcal{B} and 2-quasi-category X .

The essential image of the homotopy coherent cellular nerve functor can be characterized using an essentially commutative diagram of right adjoint functors

$$(6.1) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} {}^{1+1}/\mathbb{B}\text{icat} & \xleftarrow{N} & {}^{1+1}/2\text{-qCat} \\ \text{Hom} \downarrow & & \downarrow \text{Hom} \\ \text{Cat} & \xleftarrow{N} & \text{qCat}. \end{array}$$

Here the top functor is the sliced version of the homotopy coherent cellular nerve functor, carrying a bicategory with two chosen objects to a 2-quasi-category with two chosen vertices, while the left-hand functor is the underlying functor of the right 2-adjoint of Lemma 5.6. The bottom functor is the classical nerve functor, embedding categories into quasi-categories. The functor $\text{Hom}: {}^{1+1}/2\text{-qCat} \rightarrow \text{qCat}$ takes a 2-quasi-category X with chosen vertices x and y to the quasi-category whose m -simplices are maps $\Theta_2[1; \vec{m}] \rightarrow X$ that send the source and target vertices of $\Theta_2[1; \vec{m}]$ to x and y respectively. For a bipointed bicategory (\mathcal{B}, x, y) , such maps $B: \Theta_2[1; \vec{m}] \rightarrow N\mathcal{B}$ correspond to functors $B: [m] \rightarrow \mathcal{B}(x, y)$, where $[m]$ is the free 1-category on m composable arrows. Thus $N\mathcal{B}(x, y) \cong \text{Hom}_{N\mathcal{B}}(x, y)$, proving the essential commutativity of (6.1). Campbell proves that a 2-quasi-category is equivalent to the homotopy coherent cellular nerve of a bicategory if and only if each of its hom-quasi-categories $\text{Hom}_X(x, y)$ are equivalent to nerves of categories [Ca20, 7.28].

Thus it is sensible to identify $\mathbb{B}\text{icat}$ with its full replete image in 2-qCat under the homotopy coherent cellular nerve embedding, thereby motivating the following result:

Proposition 6.2. *There is a cartesian closed ∞ -cosmos $\mathbb{B}\text{icat}$ of bicategories and normal pseudofunctors that inherits the structure of an ∞ -cosmos from the ∞ -cosmos of 2-quasi-categories.*

Proof. Ara’s model structure for 2-quasi-categories is cartesian closed and has all objects cofibrant. Moreover, it is suitably enriched in the sense required by [RV21, E.1.4]. Thus the ∞ -cosmos of 2-quasi-categories is a cartesian closed ∞ -cosmos in which the ∞ -categories are the 2-quasi-categories and the isofibrations and equivalences are respectively the fibrations and weak equivalences between 2-quasi-categories in Ara’s model structure; see [RV21, E.3.3].

By [RV21, 6.1.4], a replete full subcategory inherits the structure of an ∞ -cosmos just when it is closed under the required “cosmological limits notions.” The simplicial cotensor of a bicategory \mathcal{B} with a simplicial set S is defined to be the exponential of $N\mathcal{B}$ with the discretely embedded Θ_2 -set iS . Since Ara’s model structure is cartesian closed and $N\mathcal{B}$ is fibrant, this is equivalent to the exponential with the replacement of iS by a 2-quasi-category T . Thus $(N\mathcal{B})^{iS} \simeq (N\mathcal{B})^T \cong N(\mathcal{B}^{\text{Ho}T})$ is equivalent to the homotopy coherent cellular nerve of a bicategory, as required.

The remaining cosmological limit notions are conical limits of ordinary 1-categorical diagrams whose objects are homotopy coherent cellular nerves of bicategories. Specifically, these include products, pullbacks of isofibrations, and limits of towers of isofibrations. Each of these is a limit of a diagram of fibrant objects in which certain maps between them are fibrations. To see that $N: \mathbb{B}\text{icat} \hookrightarrow 2\text{-qCat}$ is closed under such limits, we employ Campbell’s characterization of the essential image of the embedding.

Consider the limit object, a 2-quasi-category L , and let x and y be any pair of its vertices. The limit diagram in 2-qCat lifts to a limit diagram of fibrant objects and fibrations in ${}^{\mathbb{1}+\mathbb{1}}/2\text{-qCat}$ with limit (L, x, y) . By [Ca20, 6.5], the functor $\text{Hom}: {}^{\mathbb{1}+\mathbb{1}}/2\text{-qCat} \rightarrow \text{qCat}$ is right Quillen, so the quasi-category $\text{Hom}_L(x, y)$ may similarly be described as a limit of a diagram of fibrant objects and fibrations between them. In qCat , these are the quasi-categories and the isofibrations defined by Joyal. Since the 2-quasi-categories appearing in the original diagram are homotopy coherent cellular nerves of bicategories, Campbell’s criterion implies that their hom-quasi-categories are equivalent to nerves of ordinary categories. Since the inclusion $N: \mathbb{C}\text{at} \hookrightarrow \text{qCat}$ is closed under the cosmological limit notions [RV21, 1.2.11], $\text{Hom}_L(x, y)$ must then be equivalent to a category, which tells us that L is equivalent to the homotopy coherent cellular nerve of a bicategory. \square

Remark 6.3. Maehara gives a combinatorially explicit description of the fibrations between fibrant objects in Ara’s model structure as those maps with the right lifting property against the inner horizontal horn inclusions, inner vertical horn inclusions, vertical equivalence extensions, and horizontal equivalence extensions [Ma20]. In particular, a normal pseudofunctor between bicategories is an isofibration in the ∞ -cosmos $\mathbb{B}\text{icat}$ if and only if its homotopy coherent cellular nerve lifts against these maps. We conjecture that this class coincides with the **equifibrations**, normal pseudofunctors $F: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ with the property that:

- (i) Any equivalence $Fa \simeq b$ in \mathcal{B} can be lifted to an equivalence $a \simeq x$ in \mathcal{A} .

- (ii) For all $x, y \in \mathcal{A}$, the functor $F: \mathcal{A}(x, y) \rightarrow \mathcal{B}(Fx, Fy)$ is an isofibration of categories.

Remark 6.4. Unlike the previous two examples, the ∞ -cosmos $\mathbb{B}icat$ is not isomorphic to its homotopy 2-category. Here the simplicial functor-space between bicategories \mathcal{A} and \mathcal{B} is the the quasi-category whose n -simplices are normal pseudofunctors $\mathcal{A} \times [n] \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$. The homotopy 2-category of $\mathbb{B}icat$ is the 2-category of bicategories, normal pseudofunctors, and equivalence classes of “enhanced pseudonatural transformations.”⁴

This homotopy 2-category can also be obtained in another fashion starting from the cartesian closed category of bicategories and normal pseudofunctors. There is a product-preserving functor that takes a bicategory to the category with the same objects and whose arrows are isomorphism classes of parallel 1-cells. Change-of-base then converts the bicategorically enriched category of bicategories to a 2-category of bicategories, namely the homotopy 2-category described above.

Unlike the familiar 2-categories 2-Cat and $\mathbb{I}con$, we are not sure whether this homotopy 2-category of bicategories, normal pseudofunctors, and equivalence classes of enhanced pseudonatural transformations has been studied before. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to explore the formal category theory of the ∞ -cosmos $\mathbb{B}icat$. We leave this unfinished end for future work.

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⁴An **enhanced pseudonatural transformation** is an a normal pseudofunctor $\mathcal{A} \times C_1 \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$. Two enhanced pseudonatural transformation represent the same 2-cell in the homotopy 2-category of $\mathbb{B}icat$ if they bound a normal pseudofunctor $\mathcal{A} \times C_2 \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$.

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