

## Chapter 2

# The Configuration Space of a Rigid Body

The basic problem to be considered in this chapter consists of a freely moving rigid body  $\mathcal{B}$  surrounded by stationary rigid bodies  $\mathcal{O}_1 \dots \mathcal{O}_k$ . The stationary bodies represent fingertips, fixturing elements, or terrain segments supporting  $\mathcal{B}$  against gravity. The body  $\mathcal{B}$  represents the object being grasped, a workpiece, or the rigidified multi-legged vehicle. This chapter introduces the notion of the rigid-body configuration space, or *c-space*, which is essential for analyzing the mobility and stability of  $\mathcal{B}$  with respect to its surrounding bodies. The chapter begins with a parametrization of  $\mathcal{B}$ 's c-space in terms of hybrid coordinates. Configuration space obstacles (c-obstacles) are then introduced, and several of their properties are described. The chapter proceeds to describe the first and second-order geometry of the c-space obstacles, as this geometry plays a key role in subsequent chapters. Finally, the notion of generalized forces or wrenches is introduced in the context of configuration space.

### 2.1 The Notion of Configuration Space

The points of the rigid body  $\mathcal{B}$  retain their relative distance as the body moves in the environment, and  $\mathcal{B}$ 's *configuration* specifies the stationary state of the object in the environment. Equivalently, the position of each of  $\mathcal{B}$ 's constituent points can be determined from its configuration. The specification of  $\mathcal{B}$ 's configuration requires a selection of two frames, depicted in Figure 2.1. The first is a fixed *world frame*, denoted  $\mathcal{F}_W$ , which establishes a coordinate system for the environment, or *workspace*, in which  $\mathcal{B}$  moves. We assume that workspace is modeled as an  $n$ -dimensional Euclidean space,  $\mathbb{R}^n$ , where  $n=2$  or  $3$ . The second is a *body frame*, denoted  $\mathcal{F}_B$ , which is rigidly attached to  $\mathcal{B}$ . The configuration of  $\mathcal{B}$  can be specified by a vector  $d \in \mathbb{R}^n$  describing the position of  $\mathcal{F}_B$ 's origin with respect to the origin of  $\mathcal{F}_W$ , and an *rotation matrix*,  $R \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$ , whose columns describe the relative orientation of the axes of  $\mathcal{F}_B$  with respect to those of  $\mathcal{F}_W$ . The collection of  $n \times n$  orientation matrices forms a group under matrix multiplication, termed the *special orthogonal group*, and denoted by the symbol  $SO(n)$ .

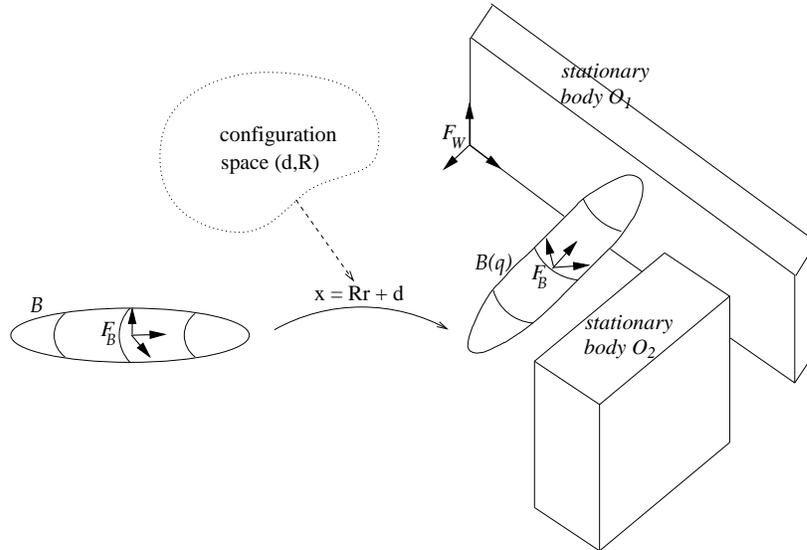


Figure 2.1: The physical geometry underlying the c-space representation of a 3D body  $\mathcal{B}$ . Think of  $\mathcal{B}$ 's configuration as a *placement* of  $\mathcal{B}$  in its workspace.

**Characterization of  $SO(n)$ .** The special orthogonal group of  $n \times n$  orientation matrices is given by

$$SO(n) = \{R \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n} : R^T R = I \quad \text{and} \quad \det(R) = 1\},$$

where  $I$  is an  $n \times n$  identity matrix.

The characterization of  $SO(n)$  provides two important insights. First, every rotation matrix acts on vectors  $v \in \mathbb{R}^n$  so as to preserve their length, since  $\|Rv\| = (v^T R^T R v)^{1/2} = \|v\|$ . Second,  $SO(n)$  is a compact smooth manifold of dimension  $\frac{1}{2}n(n-1)$  in the space  $\mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$ . In particular,  $SO(2)$  is a one-dimensional loop in the space of  $2 \times 2$  matrices, while  $SO(3)$  is a compact three-dimensional manifold in the space of  $3 \times 3$  matrices.

**Definition 1** (Configuration Space). *The configuration space of  $\mathcal{B}$ , denoted  $\mathcal{C}$ , is the smooth manifold  $\mathcal{C} = \mathbb{R}^n \times SO(n)$ , consisting of pairs  $(d, R)$  such that  $d \in \mathbb{R}^n$  and  $R \in SO(n)$ .*

The dimension of  $\mathcal{C}$  is the sum:  $m = n + \frac{1}{2}n(n-1) = \frac{1}{2}n(n+1)$ , giving  $m = 3$  when  $\mathcal{B}$  is a 2-dimensional (2D) body and  $m = 6$  when  $\mathcal{B}$  is a 3-dimensional (3D) body. We now introduce a parametrization of  $\mathcal{C}$  in terms of *hybrid coordinates* [7]. This parametrization allows us to locally represent  $\mathcal{C}$  as a Euclidean space  $\mathbb{R}^m$ , with some periodicity rules for the coordinates representing the orientation matrices.

We first introduce coordinates for  $SO(n)$ . The group  $SO(n)$  is an important instance of a *Lie group*.<sup>1</sup> A standard means for parametrizing Lie groups is via *exponential coordinates*:

$$R(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = e^{[\boldsymbol{\theta} \times]}$$

where the matrix exponential can be formally defined via the series:  $\exp(A) = I + A + \frac{1}{2!}A^2 + \dots$ , and where  $[\boldsymbol{\theta} \times]$  is a skew-symmetric matrix<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Lie groups are matrix groups possessing a smooth manifold structure.

<sup>2</sup>These skew-symmetric matrices form the *Lie Algebra* of the Lie group.

while the exponential coordinates for  $SO(3)$  are a vector  $\boldsymbol{\theta} \in \mathbb{R}^3$  (since  $SO(3)$  is a three-dimensional manifold). The exponential coordinates are constructed in two stages.

**Exponential Coordinates for  $SO(n)$ .** The exponential coordinate for  $SO(2)$  is a scalar  $\theta$  (since  $SO(2)$  is a one-dimensional manifold). The skew symmetric matrix in the matrix exponential representation of  $SO(2)$  is the  $2 \times 2$  matrix  $[\boldsymbol{\theta} \times] = \theta J$  where  $J = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$ . Consequently, the  $2 \times 2$  orientation rotation matrices are globally parametrized by the formula

$$R(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} \cos \theta & -\sin \theta \\ \sin \theta & \cos \theta \end{bmatrix} \quad \theta \in \mathbb{R},$$

where  $\theta$  is the relative orientation of  $\mathcal{F}_B$  relative to  $\mathcal{F}_W$ , measured using the right-hand rule (which measures angles in the counterclockwise direction around the upward-pointing normal to the plane).

For  $3 \times 3$  rotation matrices in  $SO(3)$ , the skew symmetric matrix  $[\boldsymbol{\theta} \times]$  has a physical interpretation as a *cross-product* matrix:  $[\boldsymbol{\theta} \times] \vec{v} = \boldsymbol{\theta} \times \vec{v}$  for any vector  $\vec{v} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ . The direction of the vector  $\boldsymbol{\theta}$  physically corresponds to the *axis of rotation*, and the norm of the vector,  $\|\boldsymbol{\theta}\|$ , corresponds to the angle of rotation<sup>3</sup> about the axis of rotation. For  $SO(3)$ , it can be shown that the matrix exponential formula reduces to *Rodriguez' Formula*:

$$R(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = I + \sin(\|\boldsymbol{\theta}\|)[\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \times] + (1 - \cos(\|\boldsymbol{\theta}\|))[\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \times]^2 \quad \boldsymbol{\theta} \in \mathbb{R}^3,$$

where  $I$  is a  $3 \times 3$  identity matrix and  $[\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \times]$  is the cross-product matrix of  $\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \boldsymbol{\theta}/\|\boldsymbol{\theta}\|$ . In Rodrigez' formula  $\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$  and  $\|\boldsymbol{\theta}\|$  are the axis and angle of rotation of  $R(\boldsymbol{\theta})$ , measured according to the right-hand rule.

The parametrization of  $SO(2)$  is periodic in  $2\pi$ , with each  $2\pi$  interval parametrizing the entire  $SO(2)$ . The parametrization of  $SO(3)$  in terms of  $\boldsymbol{\theta}$  satisfies the following periodicity rule. The origin of  $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ -space is mapped by  $R(\boldsymbol{\theta})$  to the identity matrix  $I$ . Similarly, all concentric spheres of radius  $\|\boldsymbol{\theta}\| = 2\pi, 4\pi, \dots$  are mapped to  $I$ . Each pair of antipodal points on the sphere of radius  $\|\boldsymbol{\theta}\| = \pi$  is mapped to the same matrix  $R$ , since  $R(\pi\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}}) = R(-\pi\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}})$  for all  $\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$ . Similarly, antipodal points on the spheres of radius  $\|\boldsymbol{\theta}\| = 3\pi, 5\pi, \dots$  are identified. Consider now a path in  $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ -space from the origin to the sphere of radius  $\pi$  along a fixed direction  $\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$ . This path represents a rotation of  $\mathcal{B}$  about  $\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$  by an angle which increases from zero to  $\pi$ . Moving next to the antipodal point  $-\pi\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$ , rotation of  $\mathcal{B}$  from  $\pi$  to  $2\pi$  continues on a path which moves along  $-\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$  back to the origin. Since  $\hat{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$  can have any direction, the entire manifold  $SO(3)$  is parametrized by the ball with center at the origin and radius  $\pi$ , with antipodal points on its bounding sphere identified.

**Definition 2** (Hybrid Coordinates). *When  $\mathcal{B}$  is a 2D body the hybrid coordinates for its c-space are  $q = (d, \theta) \in \mathbb{R}^2 \times \mathbb{R}$ . When  $\mathcal{B}$  is a 3D body, the hybrid coordinates<sup>4</sup> for its c-space are  $q = (d, \boldsymbol{\theta}) \in \mathbb{R}^3 \times \mathbb{R}^3$ .*

<sup>3</sup>*Euler's Theorem* states that every rigid body rotation corresponds is equivalent to a rotation about a fixed axis.

<sup>4</sup>Formally, the hybrid coordinates are  $\mathbb{R}^n \times \mathfrak{se}(n)$ , where  $\mathfrak{se}(n)$  is the Lie algebra of  $SO(n)$ . However,  $\mathfrak{se}(n)$  is isomorphic to  $\mathbb{R}^n$ , and so  $\mathbb{R}^n$  is used for simplicity

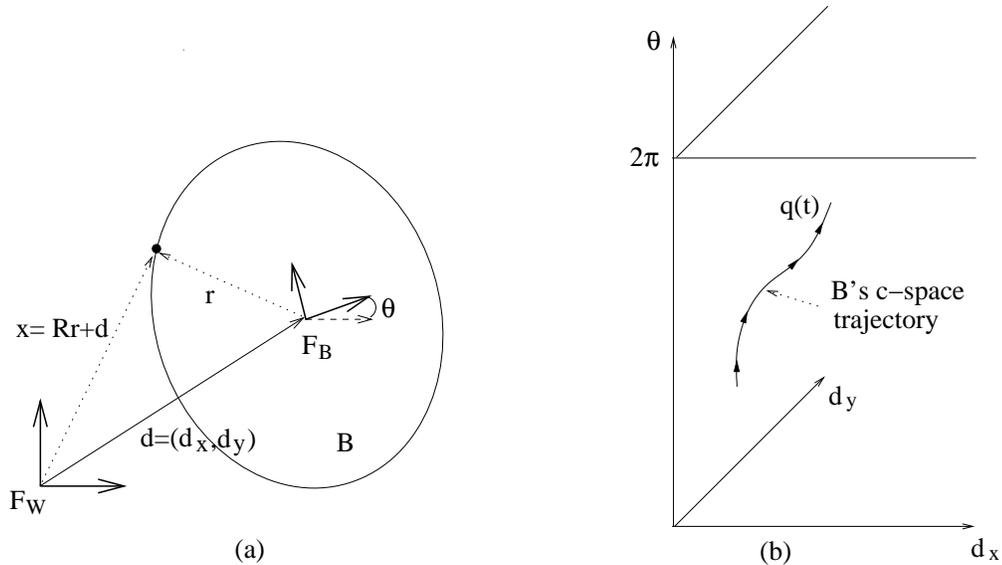


Figure 2.2: (a) Hybrid coordinates  $q = (d_x, d_y, \theta)$  for  $\mathcal{B}$ 's c-space. (b) A c-space trajectory representing  $\mathcal{B}$ 's physical motion.

When  $\mathcal{B}$  is a 2D body its c-space is simply  $\mathbb{R}^3$  in hybrid coordinates, partitioned into  $2\pi$  layers along the  $\theta$  axis (see Figure 2.2). Each  $2\pi$  layer provides a full parametrization of c-space. Hence a path  $q(t)$  can freely move between layers, or it can remain in a particular layer by wrapping through its bounding planes. When  $\mathcal{B}$  is a 3D body its c-space is simply  $\mathbb{R}^6$  in hybrid coordinates, with the  $\theta$  coordinates partitioned into a central ball and concentric shells each having a radius/thickness of  $\pi$ . Here, too, a path  $q(t)$  can freely move between neighboring shells, or it can remain in the inner ball by wrapping through antipodal points on its bounding sphere.

To summarize, c-space allows us to model the physical motions of  $\mathcal{B}$  as trajectories,  $q(t)$ , of a point in  $\mathbb{R}^m$ , where  $m = 3$  or  $6$ . Before we proceed to fill this space with forbidden regions representing the stationary bodies, let us review the notion of rigid-body transformation.

**The rigid-body transformation.** As  $\mathcal{B}$  moves along a c-space trajectory  $q(t)$ , the position of its points with respect to the world frame  $\mathcal{F}_W$  is specified as follows. Let  $b$  denote points of  $\mathcal{B}$  expressed in its body frame  $\mathcal{F}_B$ , and let  $x$  denote points expressed in  $\mathcal{F}_W$  (Figure 2.2(a)). The *rigid-body transformation*, denoted  $X(q, b)$ , gives the world position of  $\mathcal{B}$ 's points at a configuration  $q$ ,

$$x = X(q, b) \triangleq \begin{cases} R(\theta)b + d & q = (d, \theta) \in \mathbb{R}^3, b \in \mathcal{B} \quad (2\text{D case}) \\ R(\boldsymbol{\theta})b + d & q = (d, \boldsymbol{\theta}) \in \mathbb{R}^6, b \in \mathcal{B} \quad (3\text{D case}). \end{cases}$$

The notation  $X_b(q)$  will specify the rigid-body transformation such that the point  $b \in \mathcal{B}$  is held fixed. In this case  $X_b(q)$  gives the world position of the fixed point  $b$  as a function of  $q$ .

Figure 2.3: The c-obstacle induced by a stationary disc, shown for two choices of  $\mathcal{F}_B$ 's origin: (a) at the ellipse's center, and (b) at the ellipse's tip.

## 2.2 Configuration Space Obstacles

From the perspective of  $\mathcal{B}$ , the rigid stationary bodies  $\mathcal{O}_1 \dots \mathcal{O}_k$  form obstacles which constrain its possible motions. Since it is physically impossible for two different rigid bodies to occupy the same space, the stationary bodies induce forbidden regions in  $\mathcal{B}$ 's c-space, called *c-obstacles*. Let  $\mathcal{B}(q)$  denote the set of physical points occupied by  $\mathcal{B}$  when it is at a configuration  $q$ , and let  $\mathcal{O}$  be one of the stationary bodies. The *c-obstacle* induced by  $\mathcal{O}$ , denoted  $\mathcal{CO}$ , is the set of configurations  $q$  at which  $\mathcal{B}(q)$  intersects  $\mathcal{O}$ ,

$$\mathcal{CO} \triangleq \{q \in \mathbb{R}^m : \mathcal{B}(q) \cap \mathcal{O} \neq \emptyset\} \quad \text{where } m = 3 \text{ or } 6.$$

When  $\mathcal{B}$  is an  $n$ -dimensional body, the c-obstacle  $\mathcal{CO}$  is an  $m$ -dimensional set in the ambient c-space  $\mathbb{R}^m$ , even when  $\mathcal{O}$  is a point obstacle. The boundary of  $\mathcal{CO}$  is an  $(m-1)$ -dimensional set, consisting of configurations at which  $\mathcal{B}$  touches  $\mathcal{O}$  from the outside. A curve on  $\mathcal{CO}$ 's boundary represents a motion of  $\mathcal{B}$  which maintains continuous contact with  $\mathcal{O}$ . In planar environments one can conceptually construct the boundary of  $\mathcal{CO}$  as follows. First one fixes the orientation of  $\mathcal{B}$  to a particular orientation  $\theta$ . Then one moves  $\mathcal{B}$  along the perimeter of  $\mathcal{O}$  with this fixed orientation, making sure that  $\mathcal{B}$  maintains continuous contact with  $\mathcal{O}$ . The trace of  $\mathcal{B}$ 's origin during this circumnavigation forms a closed curve which is precisely the boundary of the fixed- $\theta$  slice of  $\mathcal{CO}$ . When this process is repeated for all  $\theta$ , the resulting stack of loops forms the c-obstacle boundary.

**Example 1.** Figure 2.3(a) shows an ellipse  $\mathcal{B}$  moving in a planar environment populated by a stationary disc  $\mathcal{O}$ . The c-obstacle induced by  $\mathcal{O}$  is depicted in Figure 2.3(b) for two choices of  $\mathcal{F}_B$ 's origin, at the ellipse's center and at the tip of its major axis. While the two c-obstacles differ in their geometric shape (i.e. surface normal and curvature), they are topologically equivalent. This observation holds true under any choice of  $\mathcal{F}_W$  and  $\mathcal{F}_B$ .

**The c-obstacle distance function.** An analytic description of the c-obstacle can be constructed as follows. Let  $\text{dst}(x, \mathcal{O})$  denote the minimal distance of a point  $x$  from a fixed set  $\mathcal{O}$ , given by  $\text{dst}(x, \mathcal{O}) = \min_{y \in \mathcal{O}} \{\|x - y\|\}$ . The minimal distance between  $\mathcal{B}(q)$  and  $\mathcal{O}$ , denoted  $d(q)$ , is defined by

$$d(q) \triangleq \min_{x \in \mathcal{B}(q)} \{\text{dst}(x, \mathcal{O})\} = \min_{b \in \mathcal{B}} \{\text{dst}(X(q, b), \mathcal{O})\},$$

where  $x = X(q, b)$  is the rigid-body transformation of the point  $b \in \mathcal{B}$  when  $\mathcal{B}$  lies at configuration  $q$ . Note that  $d(q)$  is strictly positive outside  $\mathcal{CO}$  and is identically zero inside  $\mathcal{CO}$ . Hence the c-obstacle  $\mathcal{CO}$  is described by the inequality,

$$\mathcal{CO} = \{q \in \mathbb{R}^m : d(q) \leq 0\}.$$

One can equivalently write  $\mathcal{CO} = \{q \in \mathbb{R}^m : d(q) = 0\}$ , but the above formulation anticipates later chapters where c-space is used to analyze the motions of a quasi-rigid body.

A detailed discussion of the c-obstacles can be found in textbooks dedicated to robot motion planning [1, 2, 4, 5]. The following list summarizes some of their key properties <sup>5</sup>.

1. **Compactness and connectivity propagate.** When  $\mathcal{B}$  is compact and path connected, any compact and path connected obstacle  $\mathcal{O}$  induces a compact and path connected c-obstacle  $\mathcal{CO}$ .
2. **Union propagates.** When an obstacle  $\mathcal{O}$  is a union of two sets,  $\mathcal{O} = \mathcal{O}_1 \cup \mathcal{O}_2$ , its c-obstacle is a union of the c-obstacles corresponding to the individual sets,  $\mathcal{CO} = \mathcal{CO}_1 \cup \mathcal{CO}_2$ .
3. **Convexity propagates.** Recall that a set  $\mathcal{S} \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$  is *convex* if every pair of points in  $\mathcal{S}$  can be connected by a line segment lying wholly in  $\mathcal{S}$ . When  $\mathcal{O}$  and  $\mathcal{B}$  are convex bodies, each fixed-orientation slice of  $\mathcal{CO}$  is a convex set.
4. **Polygonality propagates.** When  $\mathcal{B}$  and  $\mathcal{O}$  are polygonal bodies, each fixed-orientation slice of  $\mathcal{CO}$  is a two-dimensional polygonal set. When  $\mathcal{B}$  and  $\mathcal{O}$  are polyhedral bodies, each fixed-orientation slice of  $\mathcal{CO}$  is a three-dimensional polyhedral set.

A popular method for computing the explicit shape of the c-obstacles for planar bodies can be summarized as follows. The method assumes that  $\mathcal{B}$  and  $\mathcal{O}$  are convex polygons. In this case each fixed- $\theta$  slice of  $\mathcal{CO}$ , denoted  $\mathcal{CO}|_\theta$ , is also a convex polygon. The vertices of  $\mathcal{CO}|_\theta$  correspond to configurations at which a vertex of  $\mathcal{B}$  (having a fixed orientation  $\theta$ ) touches a vertex of  $\mathcal{O}$ , such that the bodies' interiors are disjoint. The vertices on the boundary of  $\mathcal{CO}|_\theta$  can be computed by a simple algorithm which merges the vertices of  $\mathcal{B}$  and  $\mathcal{O}$  on a common unit circle [2, 4].

When  $\mathcal{B}$  is a smooth convex body and  $\mathcal{O}$  is a disc, one can explicitly parametrize the boundary of  $\mathcal{CO}$  as follows. First note that as  $\mathcal{B}$  traces the perimeter of  $\mathcal{O}$  with a fixed orientation, the contact point monotonically traces the entire perimeter of  $\mathcal{B}$ . Also note that having  $\mathcal{B}$  trace with a fixed orientation the perimeter of  $\mathcal{O}$  in  $\mathcal{F}_W$  is equivalent to having  $\mathcal{O}$  trace the perimeter of the stationary  $\mathcal{B}$  in  $\mathcal{F}_B$ . Based on these observations, let  $\beta(s)$  for  $s \in \mathbb{R}$  be a parametrization of  $\mathcal{B}$ 's perimeter in  $\mathcal{F}_B$ , such that the tangent  $\beta'(s)$  is a unit vector. Let  $J\beta'(s)$  be the unit outward normal to  $\mathcal{B}$ , where  $J = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$ . Let  $r$  be the radius of disc  $\mathcal{O}$ , and let  $x_0$  be the position of its center in  $\mathcal{F}_W$ . Then during a motion of  $\mathcal{O}$  along  $\mathcal{B}$ 's perimeter, the curve traced by  $\mathcal{O}$ 's center in  $\mathcal{F}_B$  is:  $\beta(s) + rJ\beta'(s)$  for  $s \in \mathbb{R}$ . Based on a simple calculation (see Exercise 8), the curve traced by  $\mathcal{B}$ 's origin in  $\mathcal{F}_W$  is:  $d(s, \theta) = x_0 - R(\theta)(\beta(s) + rJ\beta'(s))$ , where  $R(\theta)$  is  $\mathcal{B}$ 's fixed orientation matrix. When  $\theta$  varies freely in  $\mathbb{R}$ , the function  $\varphi(s, \theta) = (d(s, \theta), \theta) : \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^3$  provides a parametrization of  $\mathcal{CO}$ 's boundary in term of  $s$  and  $\theta$ . The c-obstacles depicted in Figure 2.3 were generated using this technique.

**Example:** Obtain the c-obstacle parametrization for an ellipse obstacle, described by  $(x-x_0)^T P(x-x_0) \leq 1$  where  $P > 0$ . At the contact point  $x(s)$ :  $P(x(s)-x_0) =$

<sup>5</sup>The term “propagate in this list implies that the property in the  $n$ -dimensional Euclidean workspace propagates, or is conserved, under the mapping to configuration space.<sup>n</sup>

$-\lambda R(\theta_0)J\beta'(s)$  for some  $\lambda > 0$ . Multiplying both sides by  $P^{-1/2}$  gives:  $P^{1/2}(x(s) - x_0) = -\lambda P^{-1/2}R(\theta_0)J\beta'(s)$ . Taking the norm of both sides gives:

$$1 = (x(s) - x_0)^T P(x(s) - x_0) = \lambda \|P^{-1/2}R(\theta_0)J\beta'(s)\| \Rightarrow \lambda(s) = \frac{1}{\|P^{-1/2}R(\theta_0)J\beta'(s)\|}.$$

Substituting for  $\lambda(s)$  in the contact-normals equation gives

$$P(x(s) - x_0) = -\lambda(s)R(\theta_0)J\beta'(s) \Rightarrow x(s) = x_0 - \lambda(s)P^{-1}R(\theta_0)J\beta'(s).$$

On the other hand,  $x(s) = R(\theta_0)b(s) + d(s)$ . Substituting for  $x(s)$  and solving for  $d(s)$  gives

$$\begin{aligned} d(s, \theta) &= x(s) - R(\theta)b(s) = x_0 - \lambda(s)P^{-1}R(\theta)J\beta'(s) - R(\theta)b(s) \\ &= x_0 - R(\theta)(b(s) + \lambda(s)P^{-1}J\beta'(s)), \end{aligned}$$

where  $\theta$  is now freely varying in  $\mathbb{R}$ . Note that  $b(s) + \lambda(s)P^{-1}J\beta'(s)$  is the curve traced by  $\mathcal{O}$ 's center in  $\mathcal{F}_B$  (what about  $\mathcal{O}$ 's orientation?)

The c-obstacle boundary is generally a piecewise smooth surface in the 2D case. For instance, when  $\mathcal{B}$  is a convex polygon and  $\mathcal{O}$  is a disc,  $\mathcal{CO}$ 's boundary consists of two types of smooth two-dimensional "patches" meeting along one-dimensional curves. An edge-patch generated by an edge of  $\mathcal{B}$  sliding on  $\mathcal{O}$ , and a vertex-patch generated by a vertex of  $\mathcal{B}$  sliding on  $\mathcal{O}$ . The boundary of  $\mathcal{CO}$  is locally smooth at any configuration at which  $\mathcal{B}$  touches  $\mathcal{O}$  at a single point, such that the two bodies are smooth in the vicinity of the contact. In particular, the entire boundary of  $\mathcal{CO}$  is smooth when  $\mathcal{B}$  and  $\mathcal{O}$  are smooth convex bodies (see exercise). Similar observations hold for the five-dimensional boundary of  $\mathcal{CO}$  in the 3D case.

## 2.3 The C-Obstacles 1'st and 2'nd-Order Geometry

When  $\mathcal{B}$  is contacted by stationary finger bodies  $\mathcal{O}_1, \dots, \mathcal{O}_k$ , its configuration  $q$  lies on the boundary of each c-obstacle  $\mathcal{CO}_i$  for  $i = 1 \dots k$ . We shall see in Chapter 4 that the free motions of  $\mathcal{B}$  are determined in this case by the first and second-order geometry of the c-obstacle boundaries i.e., by the c-obstacles' normal and curvature. Let us now focus on a particular stationary body  $\mathcal{O}$ , and derive formulas for the normal and curvature of its c-obstacle boundary, denoted  $\text{bdy}(\mathcal{CO})$ . We shall assume that  $\mathcal{B}$  touches  $\mathcal{O}$  at a single point, such that the two bodies have smooth boundaries in the vicinity of the contact. We first obtain a formula for the c-obstacle normal, then obtain a formula for its curvature.

### 2.3.1 The C-Obstacle Normal

By construction  $\mathcal{CO} = \{q \in \mathbb{R}^m : d(q) \leq 0\}$ . If  $d(q)$  would have been differentiable at  $q \in \text{bdy}(\mathcal{CO})$ , its gradient  $\nabla d(q)$  would be collinear with the c-obstacle outward normal at  $q$ . But  $d(q)$  is identically zero inside  $\mathcal{CO}$  and is monotonically increasing away from  $\mathcal{CO}$ , implying that it is *non-differentiable* at  $q \in \text{bdy}(\mathcal{CO})$ . However,  $d(q)$  is Lipschitz continuous,