**be about to and the proximal future**

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I propose a semantics for the raising predicate *about* in its use as a proximal future marker (1).

(1) Dinner is **about** to be prepared.

I analyze proximal future *about* (*about*$_{prox}$) as a metaphysical necessity modal, asserting that an event described by the non-finite clause occurs in all alternative ways the world could develop (or could have developed) immediately after the reference time (cf. Condoravdi’s (2002) for *will*). Unlike *will*, *about*$_{prox}$ does not have a non-futurate, epistemic reading.

(2) a. He will be in his bedroom right now. ($\Rightarrow$ he is in his bedroom now).
   b. He is about to be in his bedroom right now. ($\not\Rightarrow$ he is in his bedroom now).

I give the following semantics for *about*$_{prox}$, where $w,t$ are the world and time of evaluation and $P$ is a property of events corresponding to the non-finite clause: *about*$_{prox}(P,w,t)$ asserts that in all metaphysical alternatives at $w,t$ (the ways that an agent predicts $w$ could develop from $t$), $t$ is located within a precursor event $e$, and $e$ immediately precedes an occurrence of a second event $e'$ of type $P$. $e$ and $e'$ are adjacent events within some sequence of events that is unfolding in each possible future from $t$. *about*$_{prox}$ is therefore restricted to uses where $t$ can be located within a precursor event which signals the imminent realization of a $P$-type event.

(3) **about**$_{prox}(P,w,t) \iff \forall w' \in MB_{metaphys}(w,t,Ag)(\exists e \exists e' (\tau(e,w') \subseteq t \land P(e') \land e <_{imm,w} e'))$

where $e <_{imm,w} e'$ means $e$ and $e'$ are subevents of an event-sequence $E$, and the timespan of $e$ (at $w'$) immediately precedes the timespan of $e'$ (at $w'$) with no intervening event in $E$

NB: $\tau(e,w)$ is the time span of $e$ at $w$

The immediate-precedence account of *about*$_{prox}$ derives the variable temporal distance between $t$ and the occurrence of the non-finite clause event, which can vary from seconds to centuries. The truth of the examples in (5) is dependent on the timespans of precursor events for the non-finite clause event: in (5a) the pen rolling towards the table-edge (seconds in length), in (5b) a period of change in the Earth’s atmosphere (centuries in length).

(4) a. The pen is about to roll off the table.
   b. The next ice age is about to hit.

**References**
