Quantum X-rays: Emerging Opportunities for Imaging, Spectroscopy, and Metrology

Sharon Shwartz[1]

[1] *Bar Ilan University, Israel*

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X-rays have revolutionized our ability to probe matter, enabling breakthroughs ranging from protein structure determination and nanoscale imaging to ultrafast studies of chemical and quantum dynamics. These advances have been driven by continuous improvements in x-ray sources, optics, and detectors.

In parallel, quantum optics has transformed the visible and infrared domains by introducing powerful new concepts such as quantum-enhanced imaging, correlation spectroscopy, and nonclassical interference. Bringing these ideas to x-ray energies could open entirely new possibilities for imaging, spectroscopy, and precision metrology.

Recent advances are beginning to bring quantum concepts into the x-ray domain. In particular, time-energy correlations generated through x-ray spontaneous parametric down-conversion (SPDC) have been shown to improve visibility and signal-to-noise ratio in challenging high-background environments, even at low photon flux. More recently, proposals for x-ray SU(1,1) interferometers and quantum magnification schemes have suggested new approaches for enhancing measurement sensitivity and extracting spatial information beyond the limits of conventional x-ray optics. Together, these developments demonstrate that quantum correlations can be exploited to access information that would otherwise be obscured by noise or lost in classical measurements.

Looking further ahead, quantum correlations may enable entirely new approaches to x-ray imaging and spectroscopy. Potential opportunities include sub-shot-noise imaging, correlation-based imaging and spectroscopy, quantum-enhanced phase retrieval, and novel reconstruction techniques capable of suppressing noise and mitigating image degradation caused by scattering or finite source size-induced blurring. Such methods could ultimately address challenges that remain difficult for classical x-ray techniques, opening new routes toward low-dose imaging, enhanced contrast, improved sensitivity, and new forms of image formation.