A Glimpse Forward: A Conversation Across Time with Professor Artur Ekert

(Shen Hongshan, 3036290936)

The tutorial room was buzzing with the usual pre-class chatter. Our tutor loaded the week's material - "Today we're watching a classic interview with quantum cryptography pioneer Artur Ekert, recorded back in 2015..." As the video began, something strange happened. The tutor's voice faded into a distant echo. The students around me seemed to dissolve into haze. Only Ekert's image on screen grew sharper, more vivid, until I realized I wasn't watching a recording anymore - I was there, in 2015, standing at the back of the actual interview venue.

(quantum cryptography: Unpacking EPR Pairs & The E91 Protocol) "Professor Ekert”, I began, “ about those ‘spooky’ EPR pairs...Could you explain how Einstein’s philosophical concern, ‘entanglement’, become the foundation for your cryptography model E91 Protocol? ”

“Let’s use a ‘magic box’ example to explain it. Imagine a magic box with left and right part, before observation the ball will be in superposition states(Lecture 2, p33), which are new states other than classic left or right. When we open the box (do the observation), superposition state collapse to a classical state. Entanglement(Lecture 3, p15), seen it as a special kindd of superposition involving two boxes. Imagine we have a special source that produces pairs of boxes in what we call a Bell state (Lecture 3, p11-12). In this state, you cannot describe the state of one box independently of the other. The two boxes are a single, connected system.  If Alice and Bob each take one box from an entangled pair to distant locations, and they both open their boxes (a measurement), they will always find their balls on the same side. If Alice sees 'left', Bob's will be 'left'. If she sees 'right', his will be 'right'. This perfect correlation happens instantly, no matter the distance. This is the 'spooky action at a distance' that so troubled Einstein, but countless experiments have confirmed it's real (Lecture 4, p33-35).

"So in your E91 protocol, this is how you create a secret key?"

"Precisely. In E91, the source sends entangled box pairs to Alice and Bob. To establish a shared secret bit, they both perform the same type of 'magic shake'—a specific way of manipulating the box before opening it, which corresponds to choosing a measurement basis (Lecture 2, p30-31). Because of the entanglement, their outcomes—'left' or 'right'—will be identical. They can agree, for instance, that 'left' is 0 and 'right' is 1. This shared, random sequence of 0s and 1s becomes their secret key."

"But what if an eavesdropper( Eve) intercepts the boxes? Could she mimic the entanglement?"

“The answer is no, and this is the core of its security. The No-Cloning property of quantum (Lecture 2, p49-53) prevents Eve from copying a magic box. Her only option is to intercept and measure Bob's box herself. But the moment she performs her 'magic shake,' she collapses the entanglement (Lecture 3, p36), destroying the quantum correlation. This sabotage is detectable. In the E91 protocol, Alice and Bob randomly use different types of 'magic shakes' (measurements). Later, they perform a Bell test (Lecture 4, p28-30) by comparing their choices for a subset of boxes.With entanglement, their results will show correlations so strong that they violate a Bell inequality—something impossible in a classical world. If Eve has intervened, the entanglement is broken, and their results will meekly obey the classical limit of the inequality, instantly revealing her presence.”

(Quantum Computing’s True Potential) "You mentioned that quantum computers’s most significant impact(in general) is. creating completely a new class of questions to solved and algorithm as method. Could you elaborate?"

"For example, simulating molecules for drug discovery. Classically, tracking each particle's state requires exponential resources (Lecture 6, p6). But with qubits in superposition (Lecture 2, p20-26), a quantum computer explores all possibilities at once. It’s like using a magic box that tests all paths in a maze simultaneously."

"In the following decade, Professor, your vision is reality. Companies now use quantum simulators to design new materials, and quantum machine learning is unlocking patterns in data that were previously invisible."

“However, you also stated that: ‘It might be wrong to expect quantum computers to better than classical computer in solving classical and well-defined problems. I understand your caution, but looking from the future, we've found the situation to be quite different.”

"Oh? Please continue."

"The key lies in how we 'redefine' these problems. Take prime factorization - it's one of the most classical mathematical puzzles. Yet in 1994, Peter Shor conceived an algorithm that uses quantum superposition and interference - much like what we call the 'magic shake' (Lecture 2, p30-31) as you mentioned before and 'constructive/destructive interference' (Lecture 6, p37) - transforming what was nearly impossible for classical computers into a feasible task for quantum machines. Isn't this a complete of how we approach a classical problem? "

"Then consider solving systems of linear equations, the foundation of countless scientific computations. The HHL algorithm(Lecture6) demonstrates quantum's exponential advantage under specific conditions. Even where we don't have exponential speedup, algorithms like Grover's search providing quadratic acceleration can still fundamentally change the game rules across multiple industries."

"So we've come to see that quantum computing's value lies precisely in providing us with a completely new 'toolbox,' allowing us to re-examine and solve those 'classical' challenges that once stumped conventional computers. It's not a universal solution, but it's actively redrawing the boundaries between 'possible' and 'impossible'."

(Future prospect) "You speak with such conviction about these developments. Tell me, how have these quantum tools actually evolved? What have we built?"  
 "What started in laboratories has now reached orbit, Professor. China's Micius satellite has transformed quantum key distribution from theory to global infrastructure. We're now sending entangled photons through space, creating hack-proof channels that span continents." I paused, watching his eyes widen. "It's like your E91 protocol scaled to the heavens – we're performing Bell tests between ground stations and satellites." (Lecture 5, p56-59)

"Even more remarkably, your prediction of device-independent cryptography becomes reality. We've built random number generators where we don't need to trust the devices themselves – the violation of Bell inequalities guarantees their security. Your theoretical framework has become practical assurance." (Lecture 5, p59)

"That’s amazing. I said that quantum computing will be seeing great development inthe following years. I’m always hoping that my work could benifit the public, so is how quantum technologies influenced daily life. ”

“While full-scale quantum computers are still emerging, quantum sensors are already revolutionizing everything from navigation to medicine. They're enhancing GPS accuracy, detecting diseases through ultra-sensitive magnetic imaging, and yes – even Samsung phones now use quantum-random encryption." (Lecture 5, p62)

(Closing) The words felt both impossible and inevitable. "Professor, I must confess something extraordinary. I'm not from this time. I traveled here from 2025, from a world where your theoretical seeds have grown into forests of innovation."  
 He leaned back slowly, the papers on his desk forgotten. A profound smile spread across his face, touching the corners of his eyes. "So," he said softly, "the trees we planted have truly borne fruit." He gazed out the window momentarily, as if seeing across time itself. "I always believed entanglement was more than just a puzzle to solve – it was nature's way of showing us a new language. To hear that we've learned to speak it... that students like you are having this conversation a decade from now..." He turned back, his expression radiant with wonder. "This is beyond anything I dared imagine."  
 As I prepared to return to my time, I reflected on the tapestry of progress: from Einstein’s skepticism to Bell’s inequalities, from Ekert’s E91 protocol to global quantum networks. Each scientist built upon the last, often without knowing how their 'pure' research would transform the world. Standing in 2015, Ekert saw the potential—but even he couldn’t foresee that in just ten years, quantum technologies would leap from labs into our daily lives. Time has a way of turning theoretical 'magic boxes' into engines of revolution.  
Remark:  
Lecture 2: Magic boxes, superposition, measurement collapse.   
Lecture 3: Entanglement, Bell states, spooky action.   
Lecture 4: CHSH game, Bell inequalities, true randomness.   
Lecture 5: E91/BB84 protocols, device-independent crypto, QKD networks.   
Lecture 6: Quantum simulation, exponential speedup, quantum supremacy.  
AI Usage Statement: AI was used to refine grammar and enhance narrative flow.