

US 20040184711A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Bradley et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2004/0184711 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Sep. 23, 2004**(54) **OPTICAL SWITCHES AND ROUTERS AND
OPTICAL FILTERS**(52) **U.S. Cl. 385/16; 385/40**(76) Inventors: **Kenneth Bradley**, Hinsdale, IL (US);
Ward Lopes, Chicago, IL (US)(57) **ABSTRACT**

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John W. Hayes**Dykema Gossett Rooks Pitts PLLC****10 South Wacker Drive****Suite 2300****Chicago, IL 60606 (US)**(21) Appl. No.: **10/734,790**(22) Filed: **Dec. 12, 2003****Related U.S. Application Data**(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. PCT/US02/
19562, filed on Jun. 20, 2002.**Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.⁷ G02B 6/26**

Our invention relates generally to an optical switch (31) and an optical router (10) to rapidly route signals from particular channels (22, 24) within an optical band by using optical switches (20) which utilize a controlled whispering gallery mode (WGM) resonance of dielectric microspheres (S1, S2, S3) to optically switch signals. Another invention relates to optical filters which use a WGM resonate structure (150) to isolate and switch specific optical signals between waveguides (F1, F2). In other inventions, the filter (100) is switched "on/off" by signal loss within a WGM resonate structure (150) which disrupts the WGM resonance; the filter (100) isolates and switches a specific wavelength signal from among a group of signals of different wavelengths; and is switched "off" by adjusting the index of refraction of the resonate structure to become substantially similar to the index of refraction of the surrounding medium.

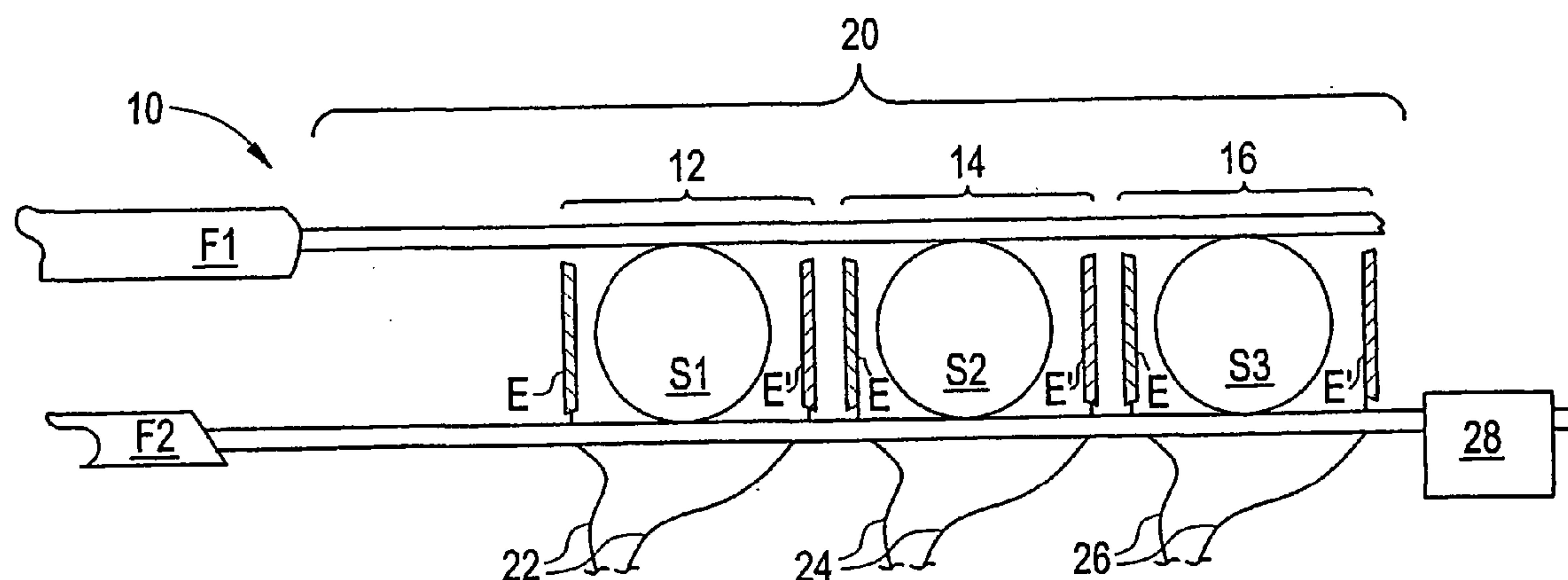


FIG. 1

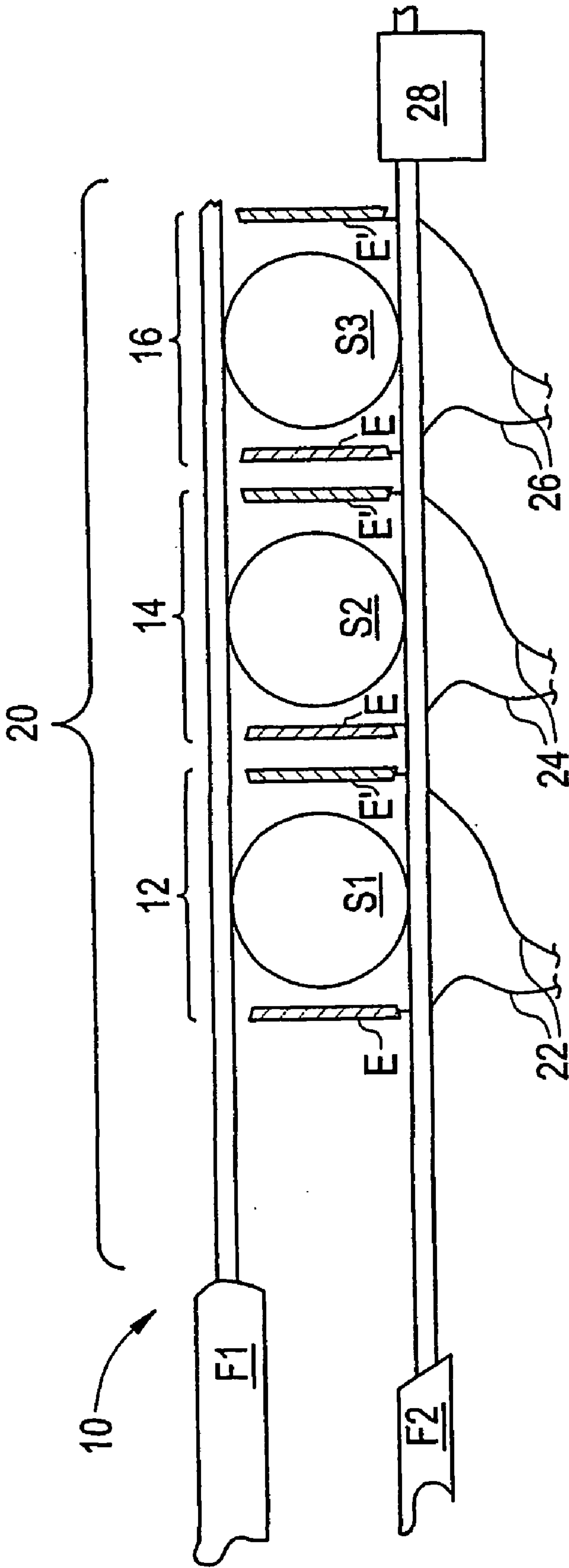


FIG. 2A

FIG. 2B

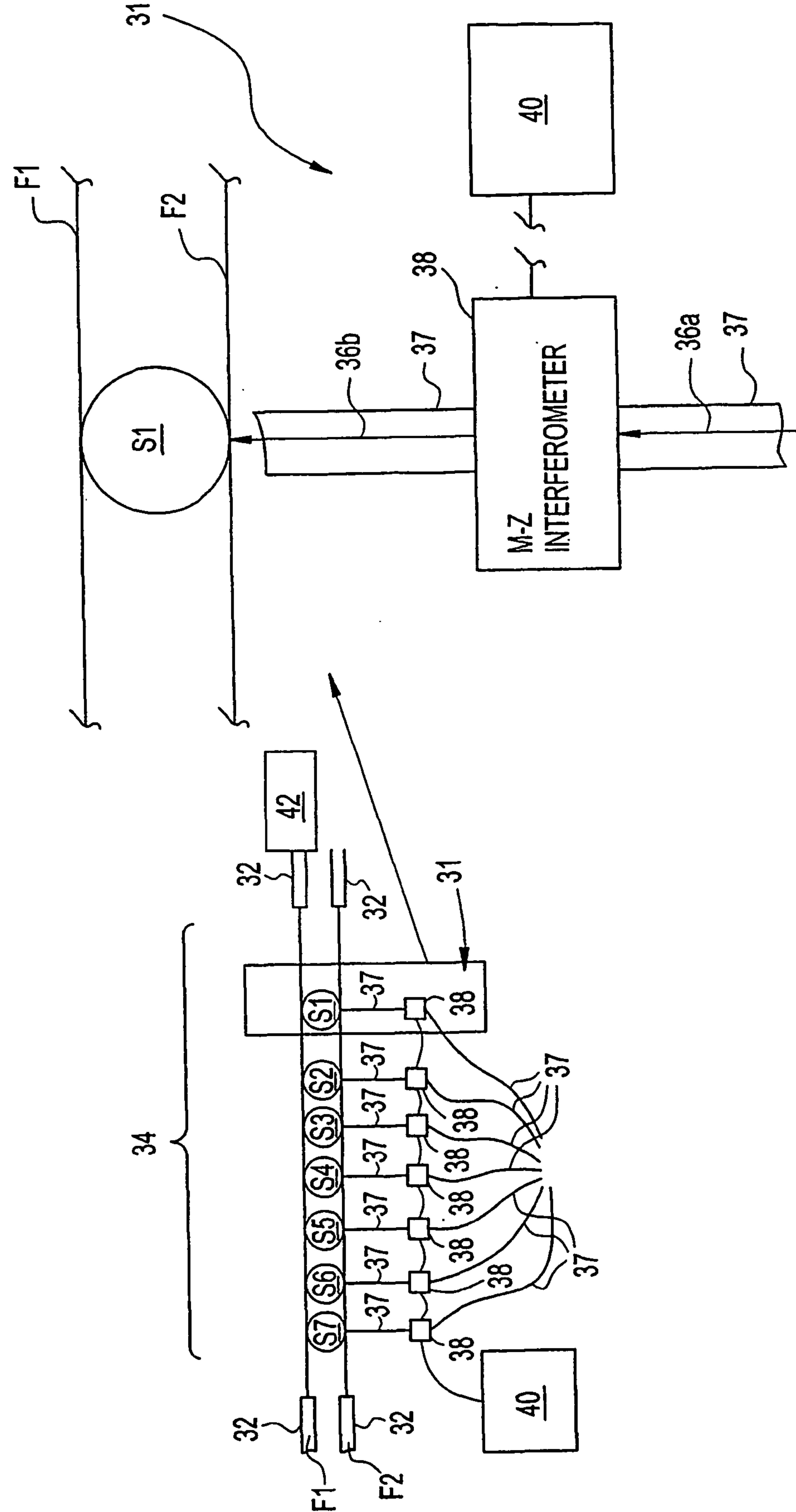


FIG. 3A

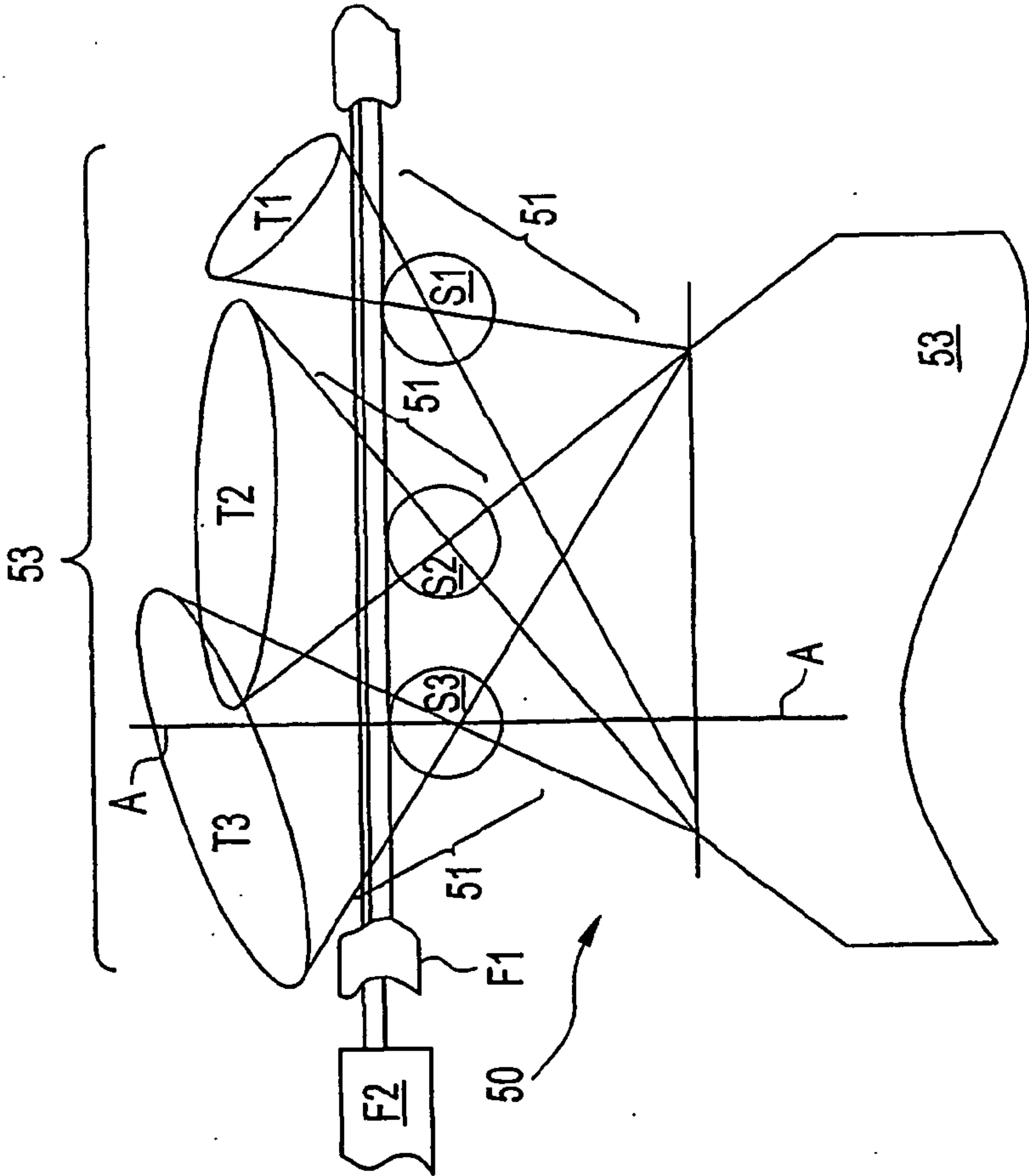


FIG. 3B

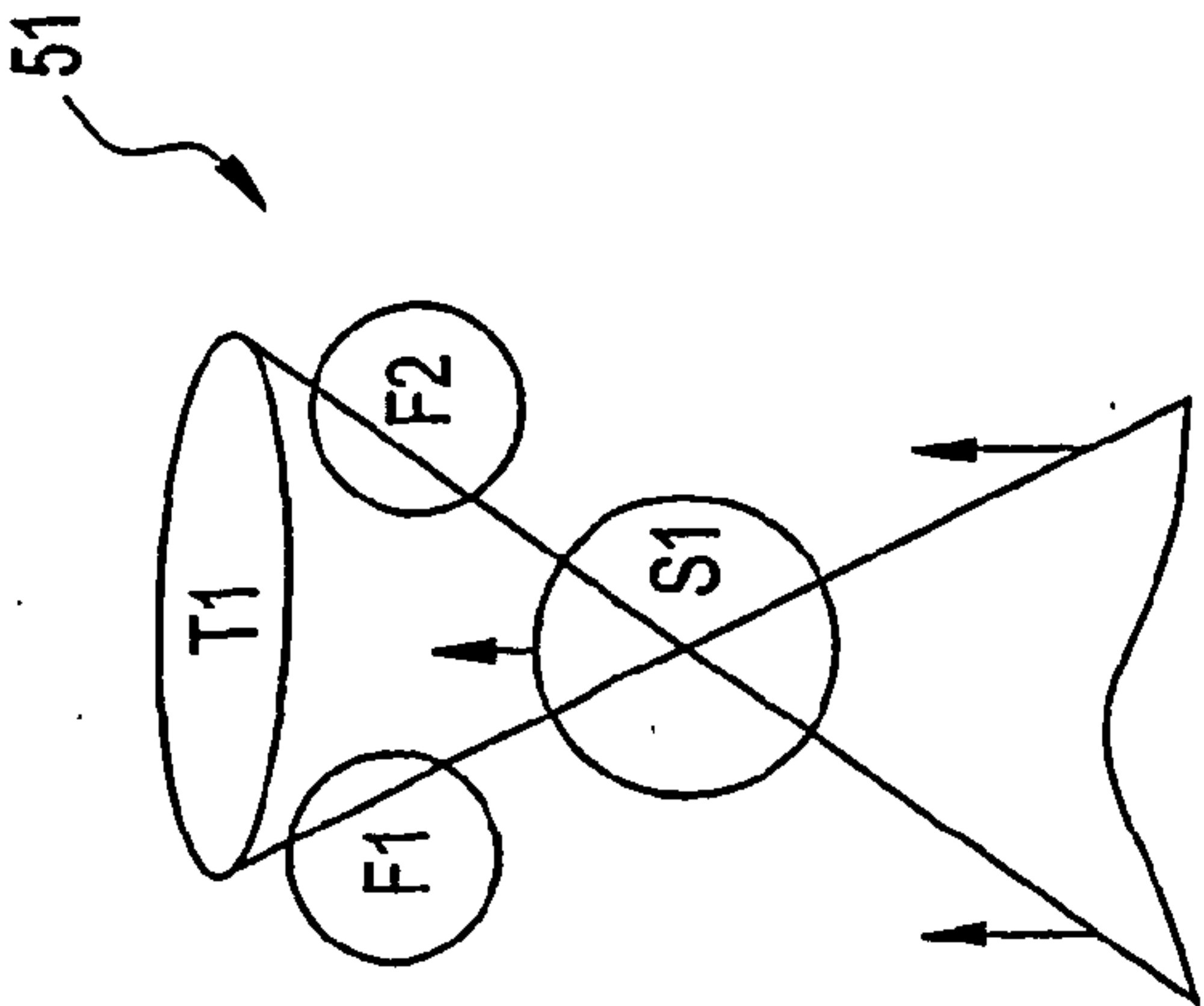


FIG. 3C

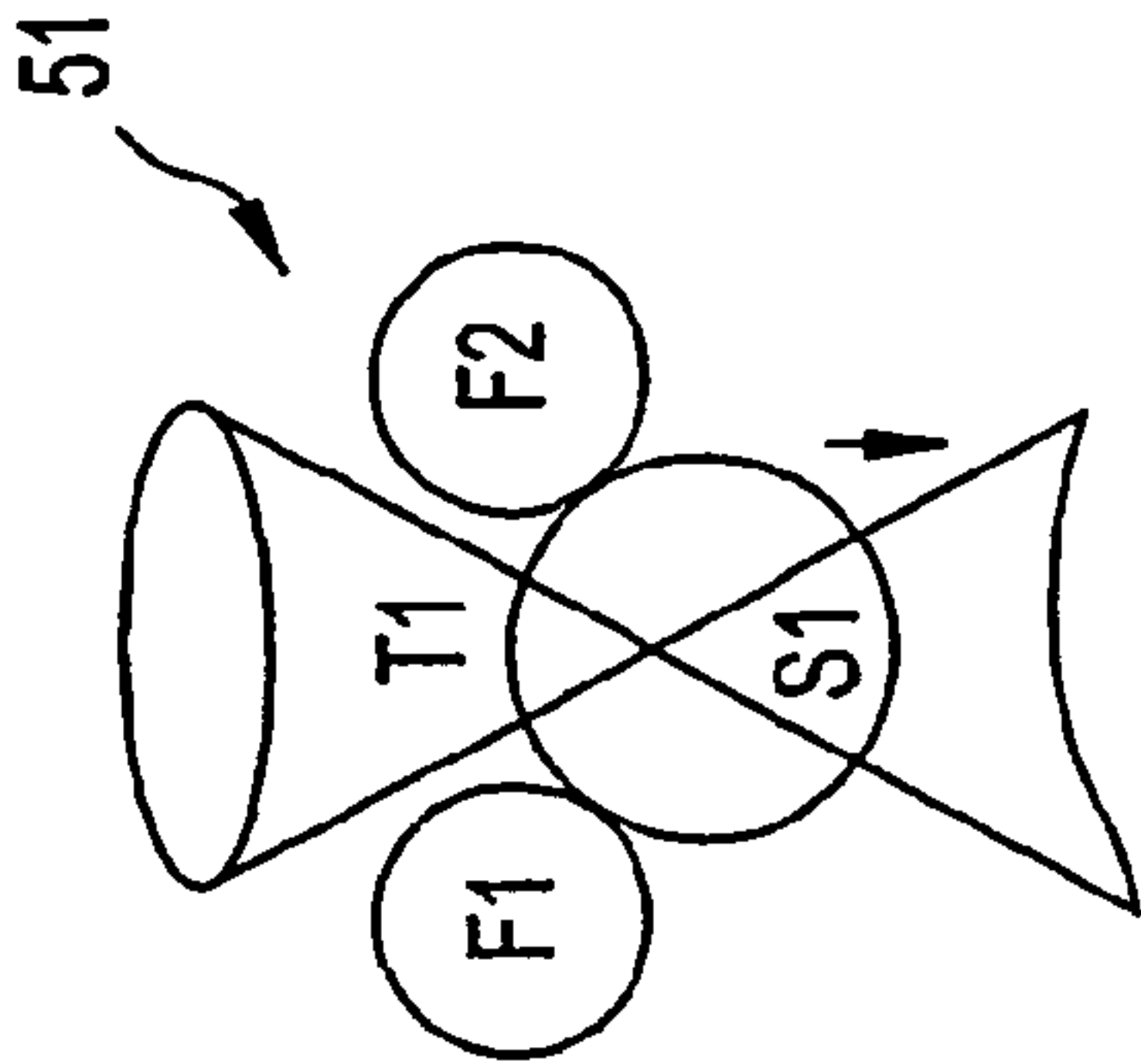


FIG. 4

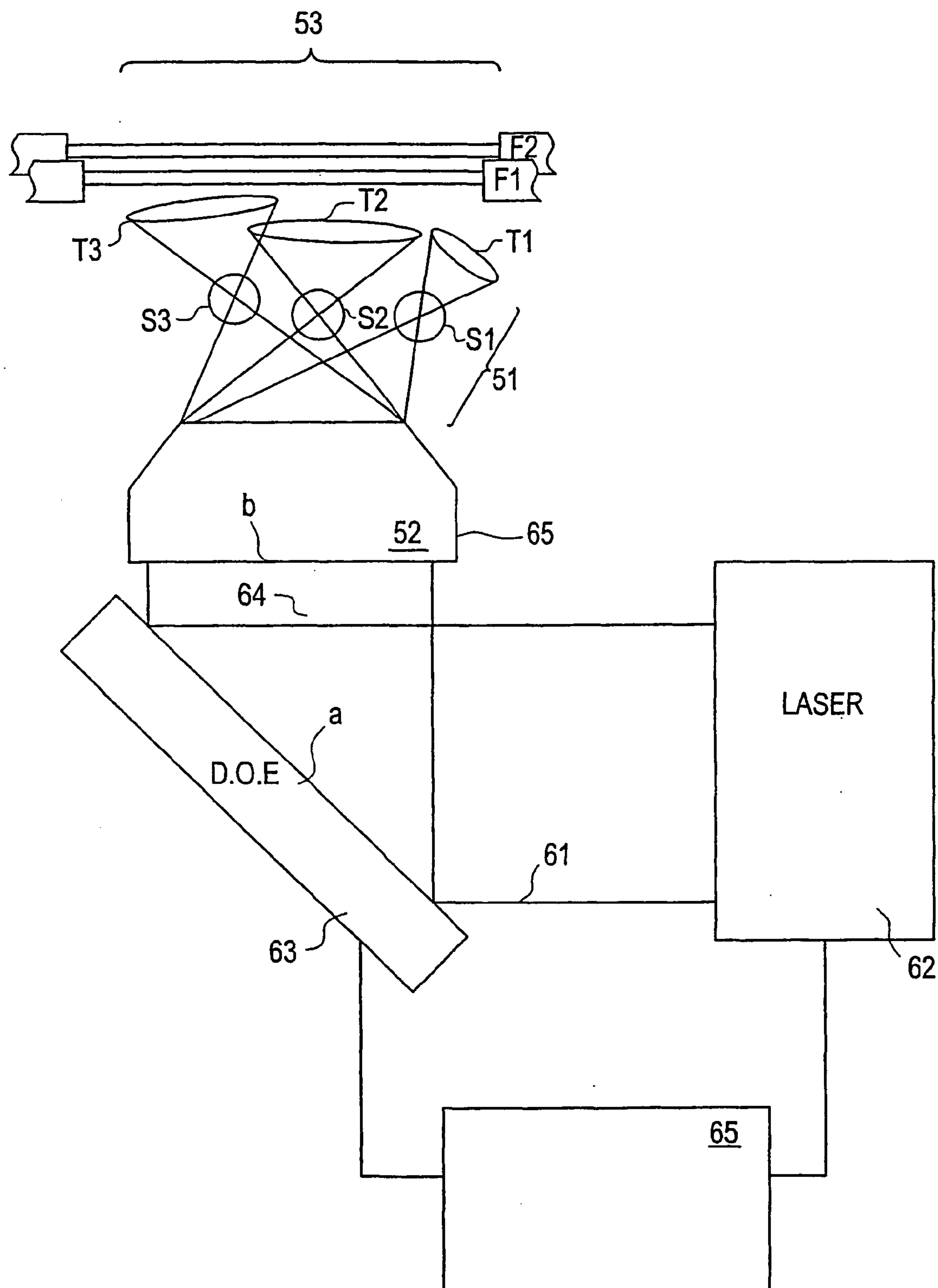


FIG. 5

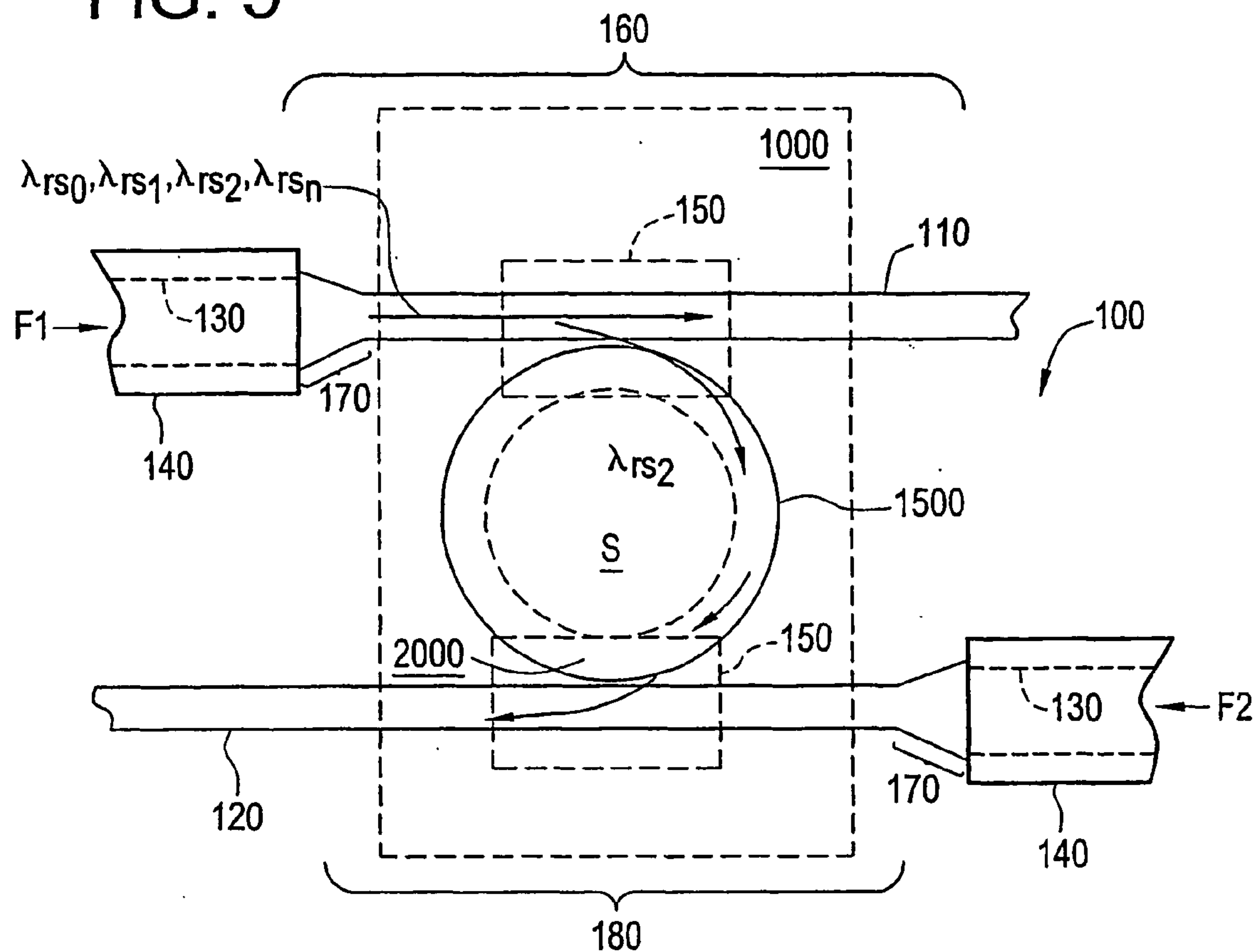


FIG. 6

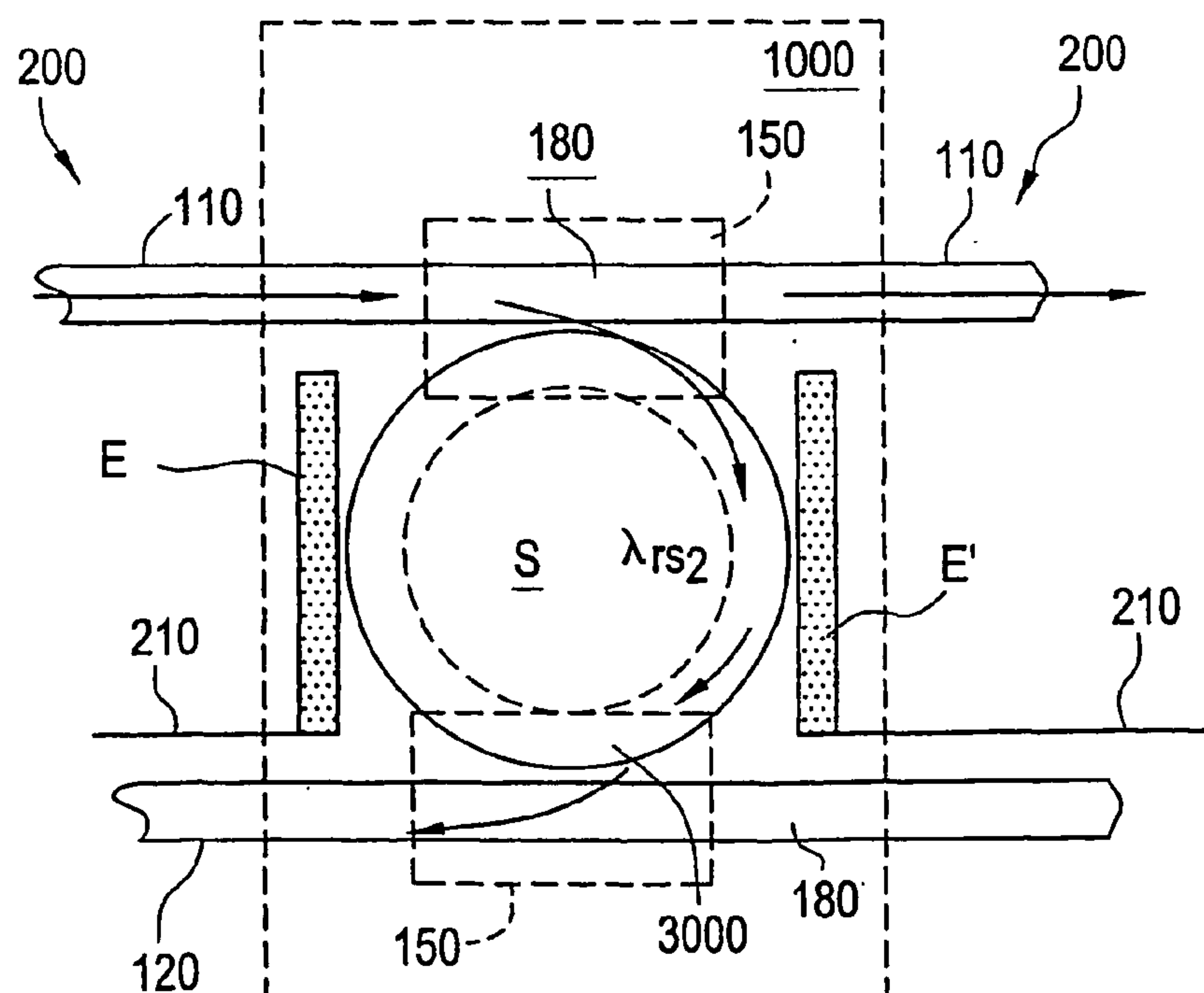


FIG. 7

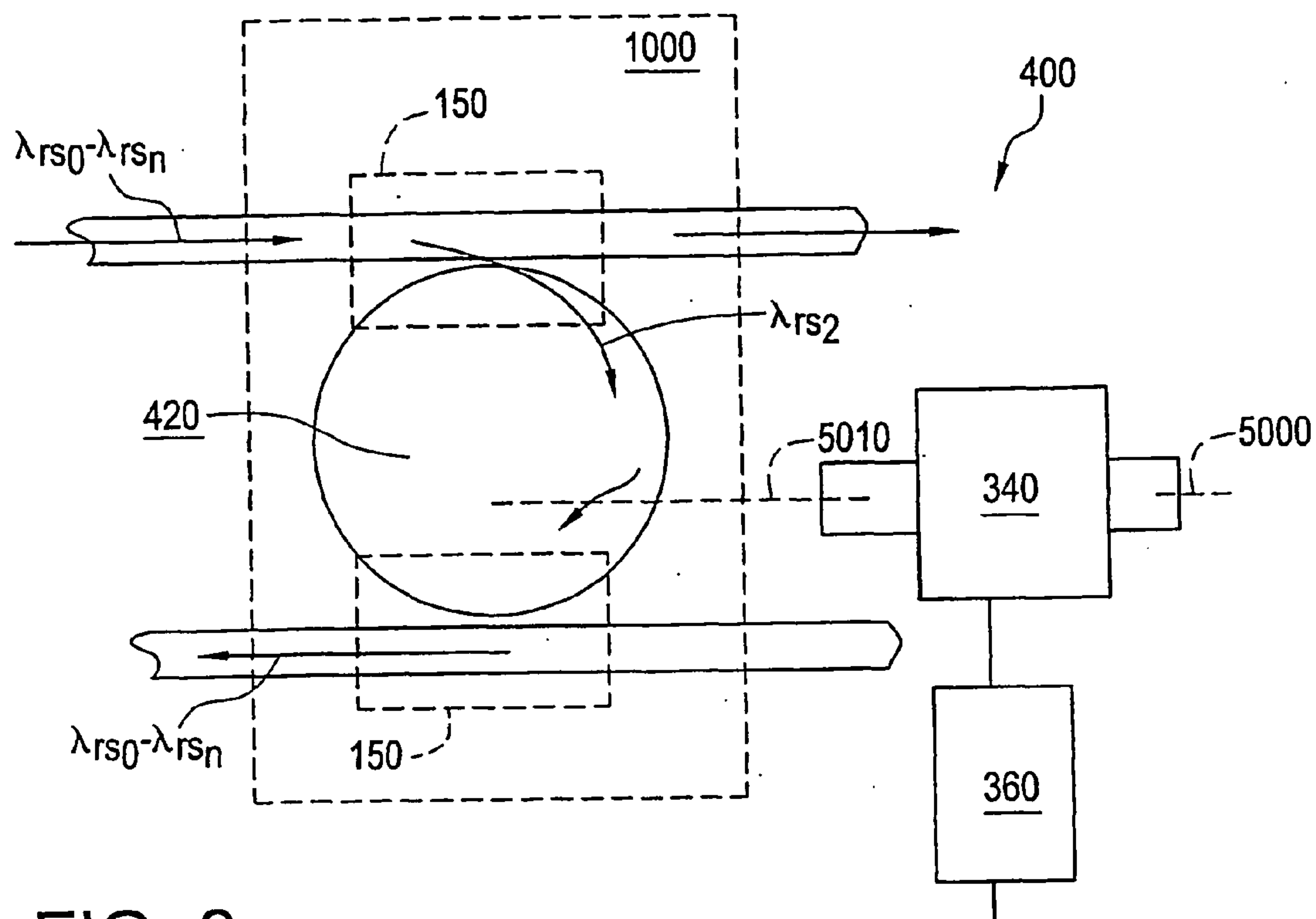
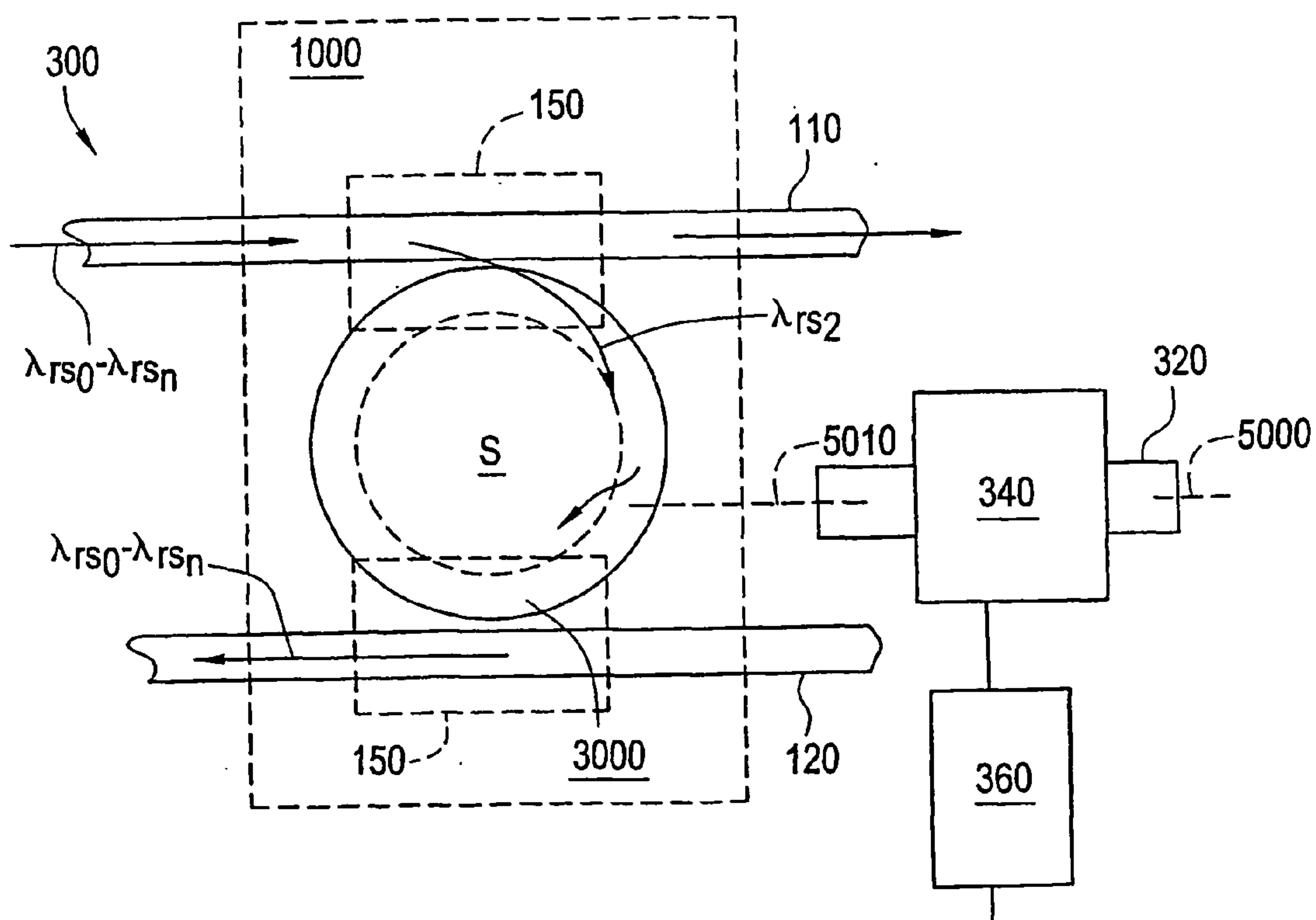


FIG. 8



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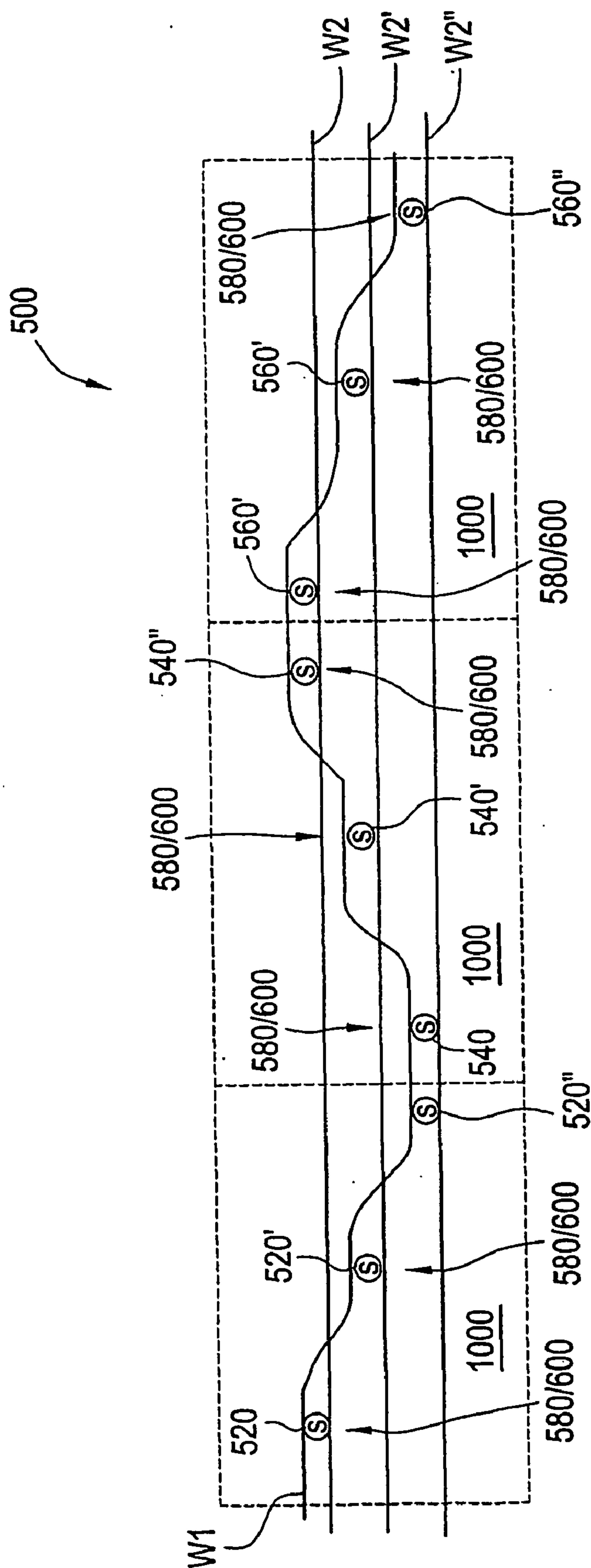


FIG. 10

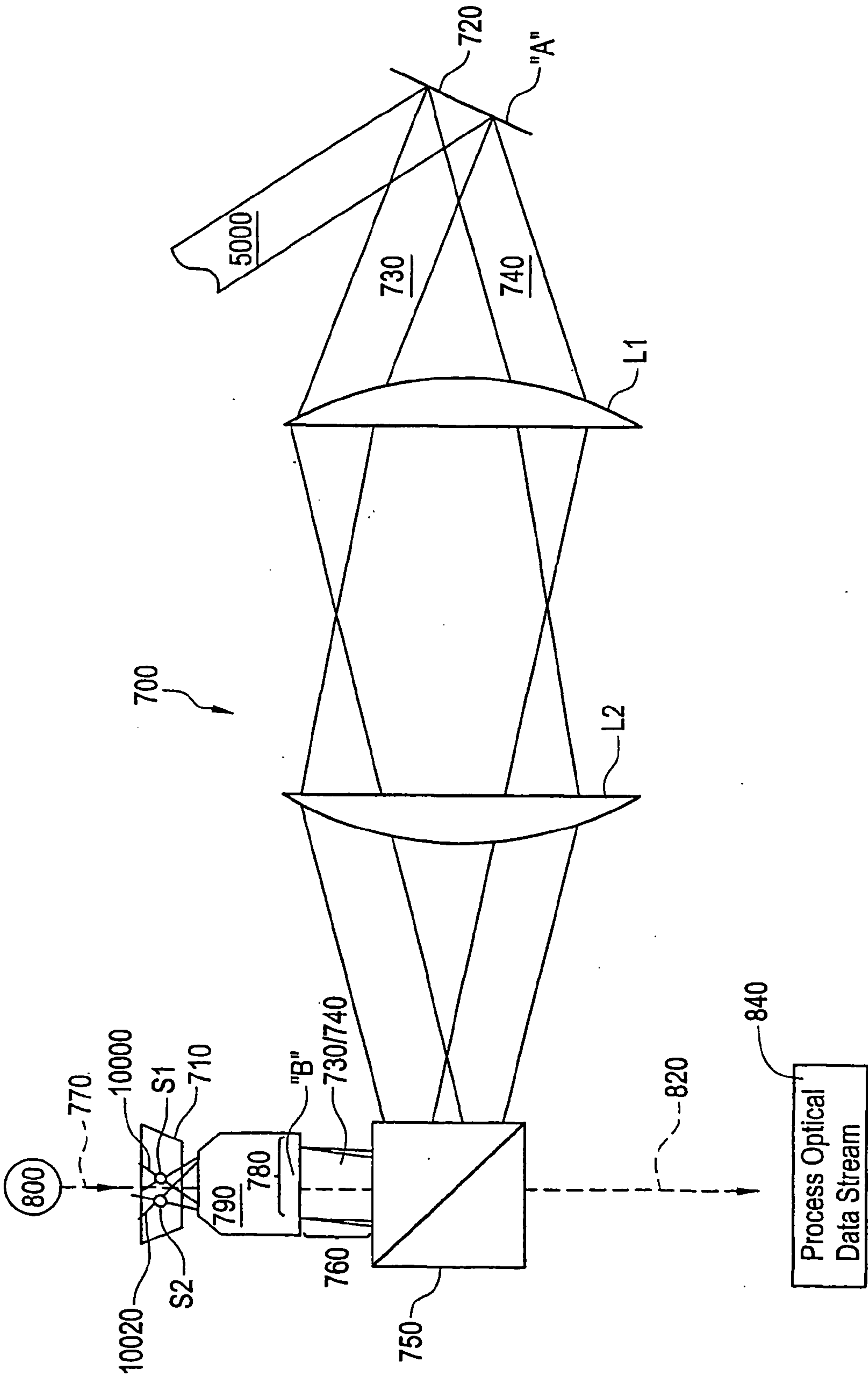


FIG. 11A

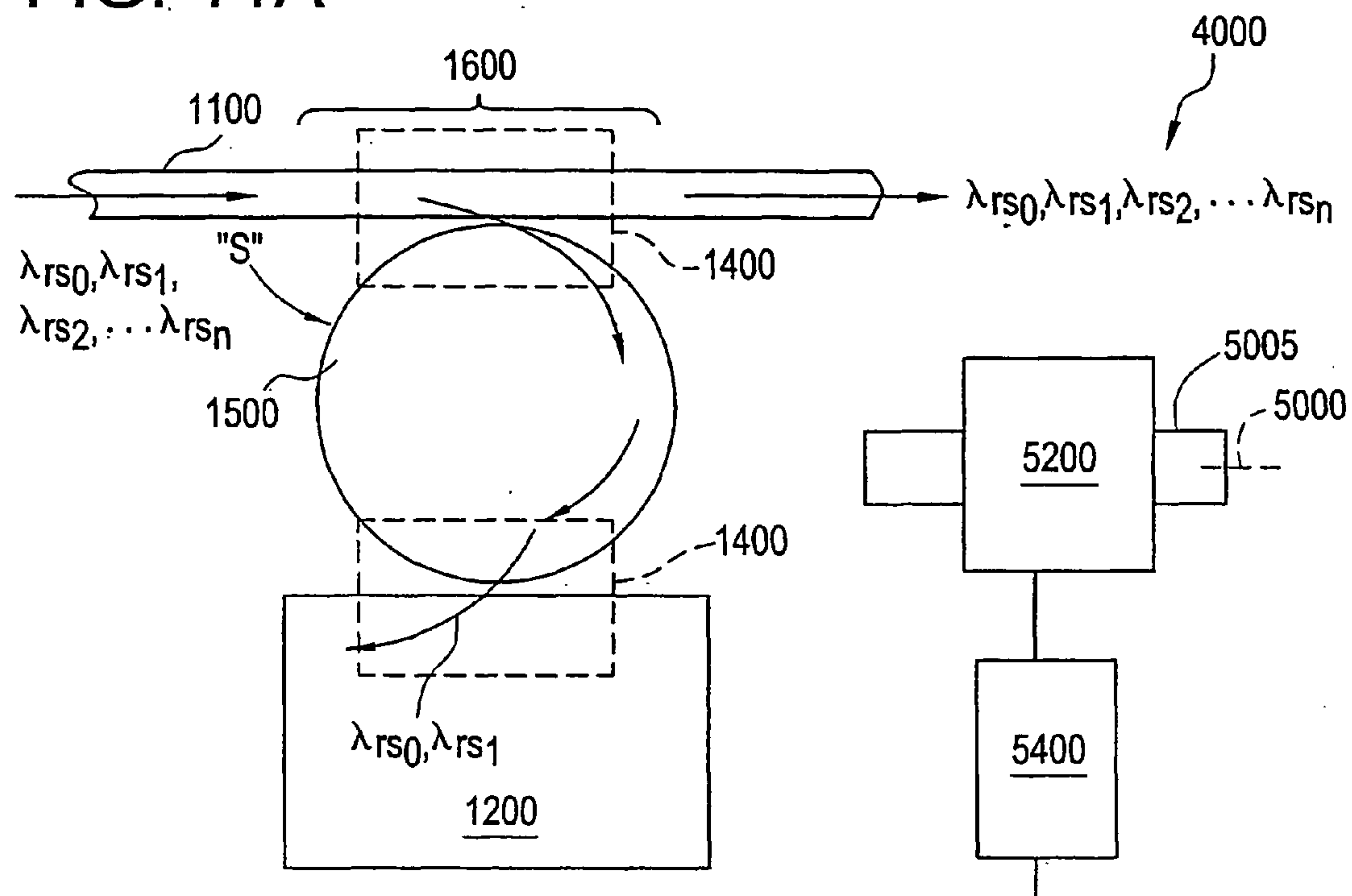


FIG. 11B

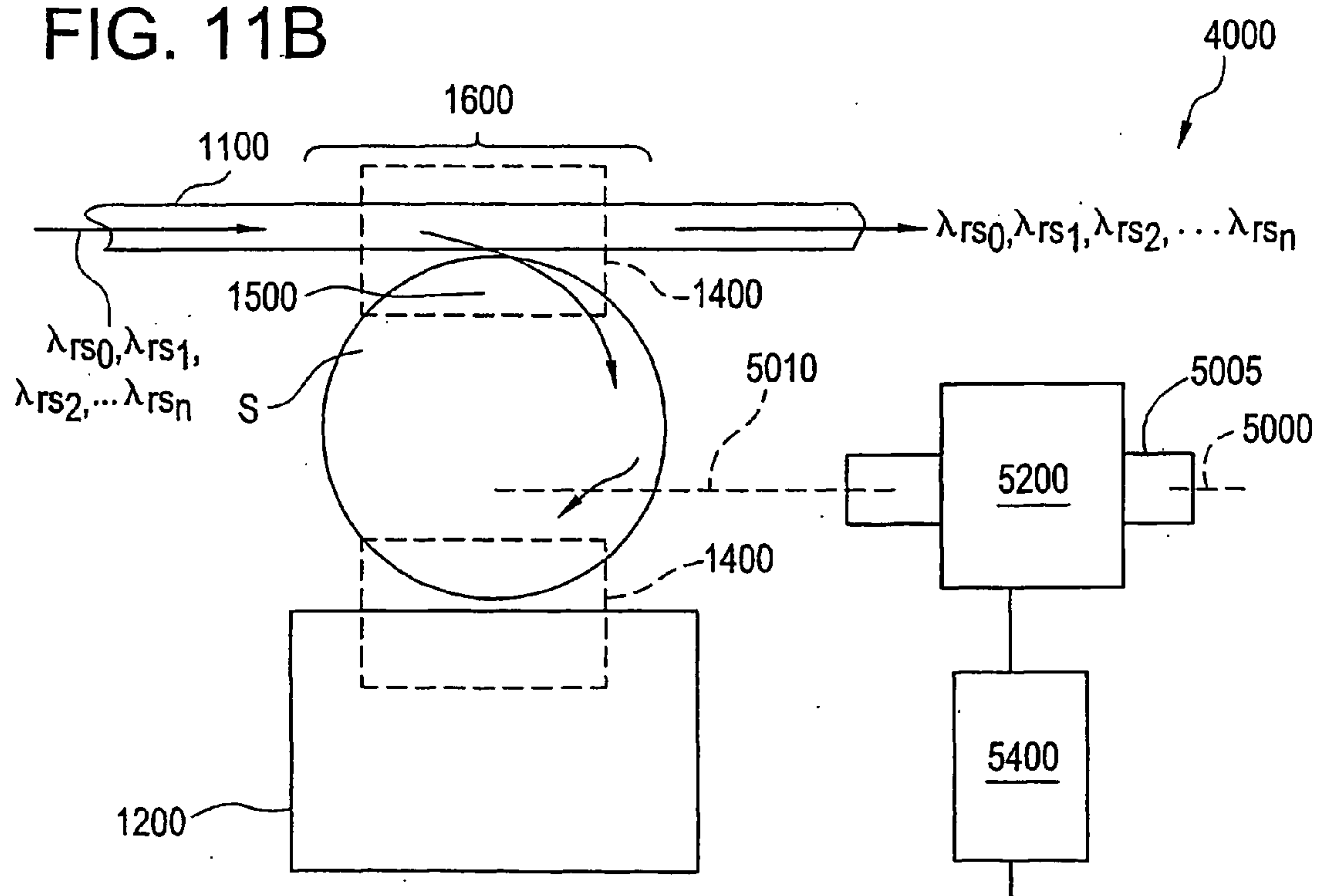


FIG. 12

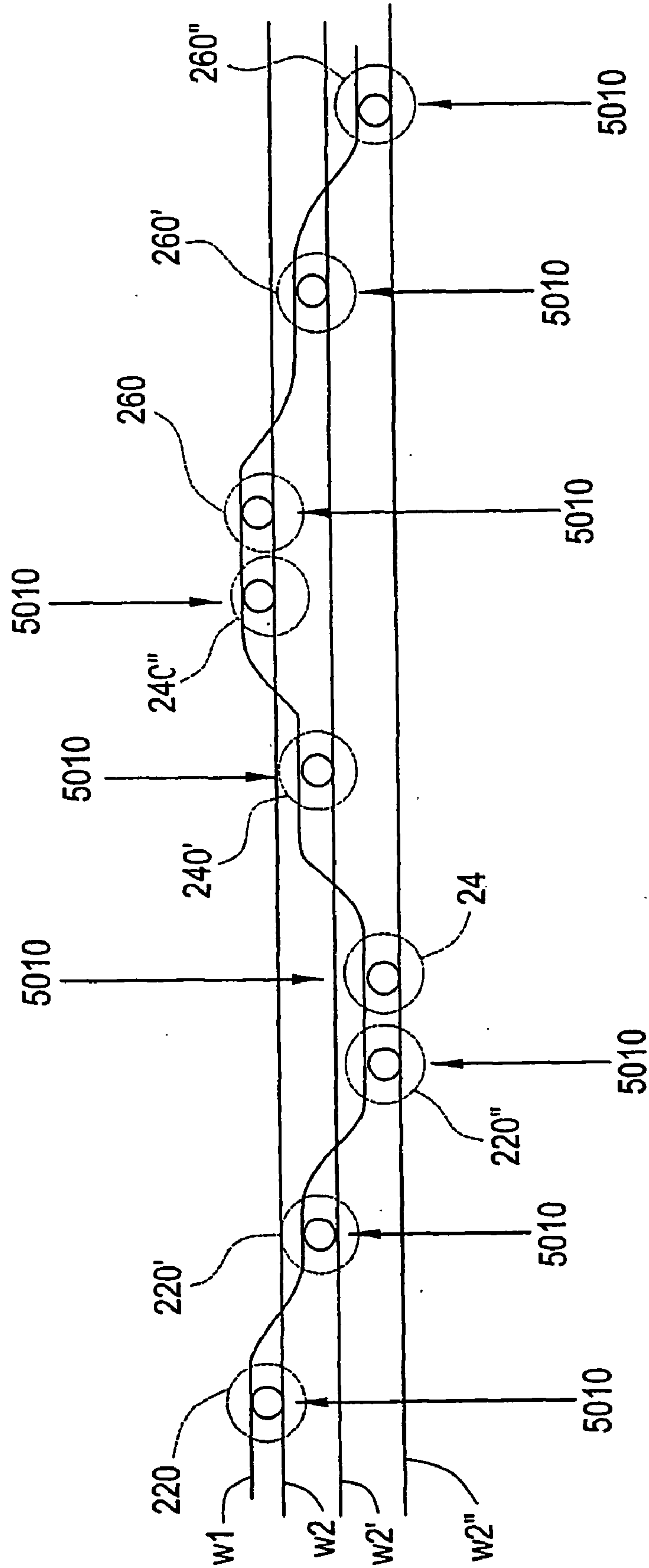


FIG. 13

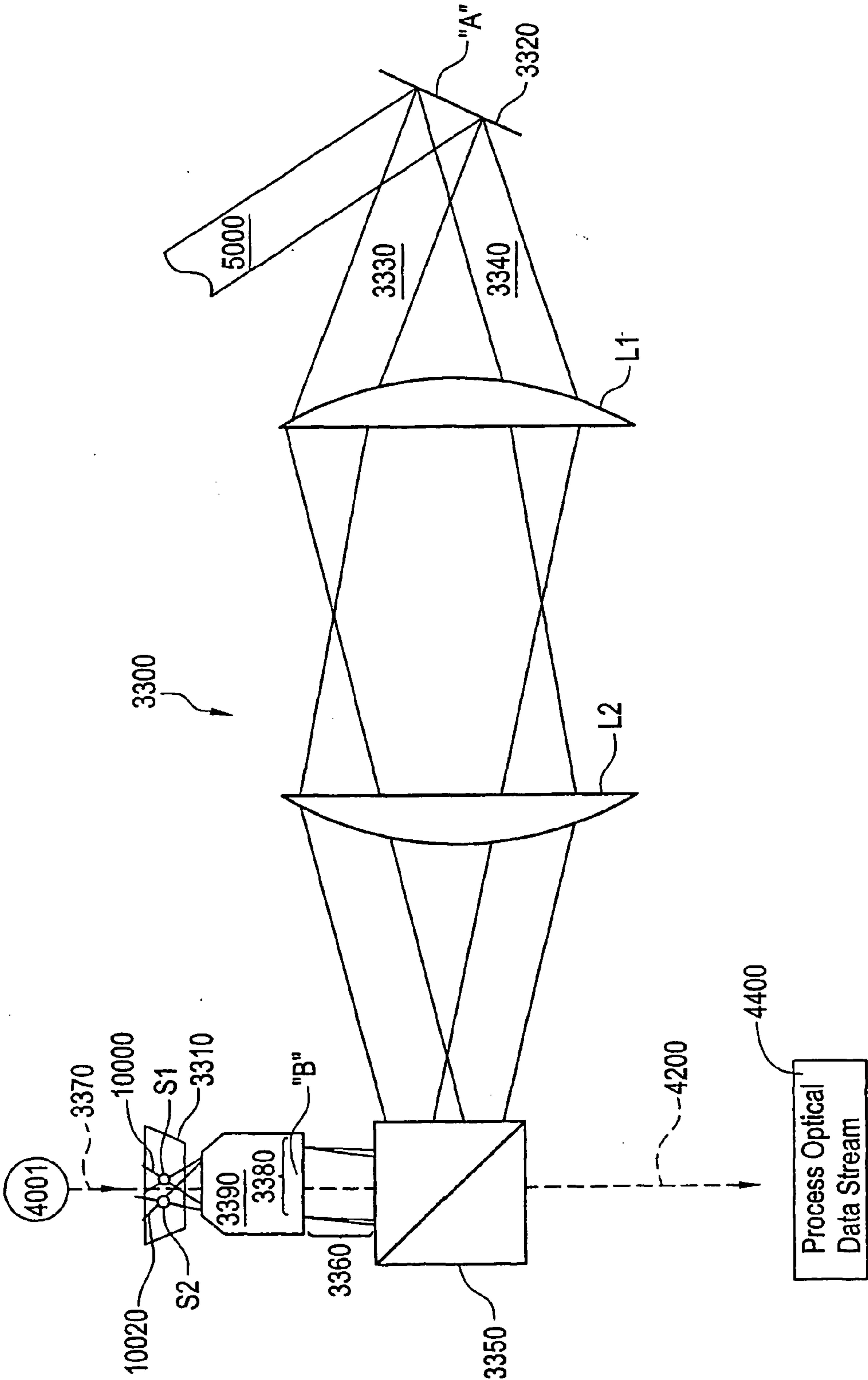


FIG. 14

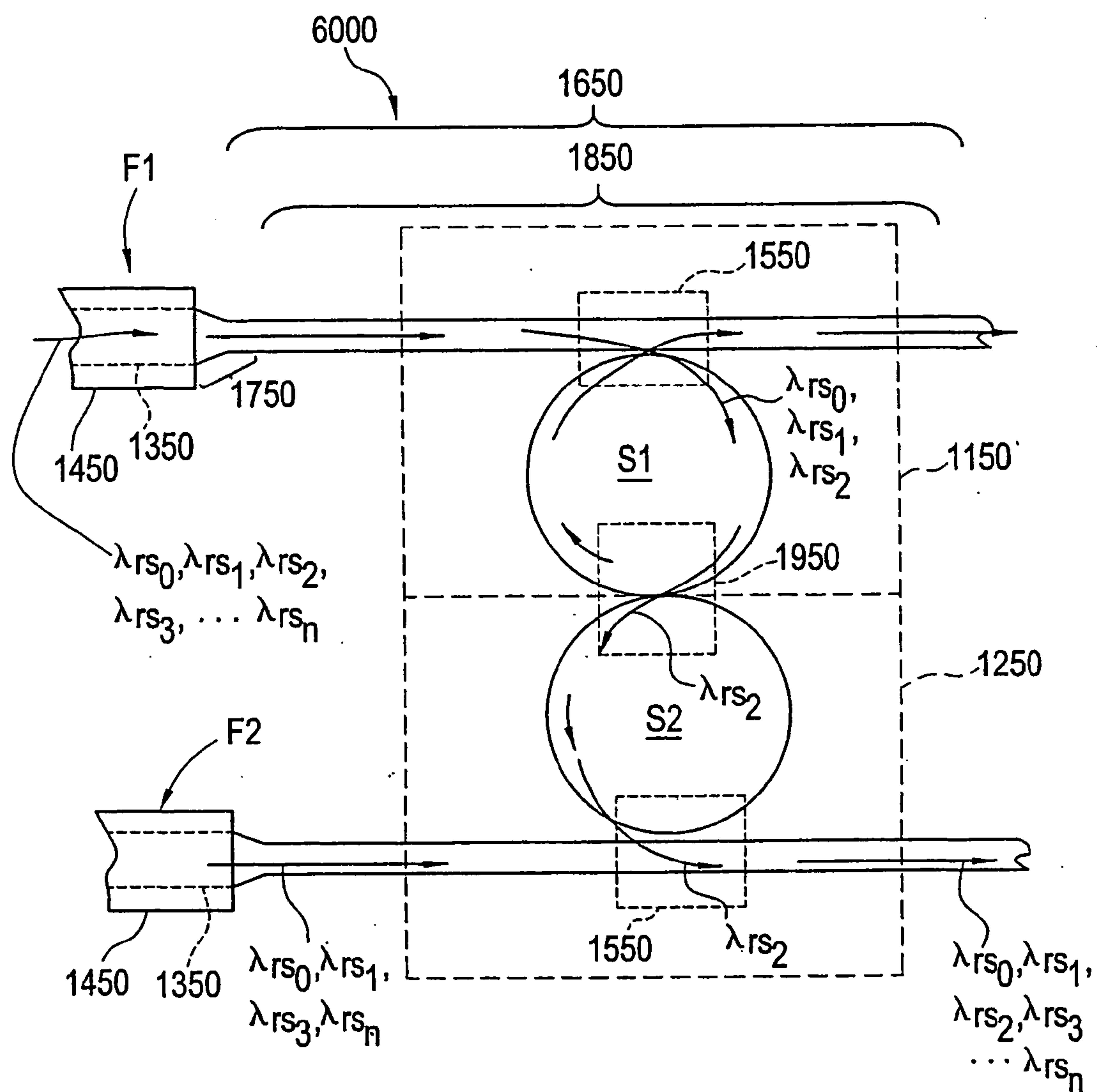
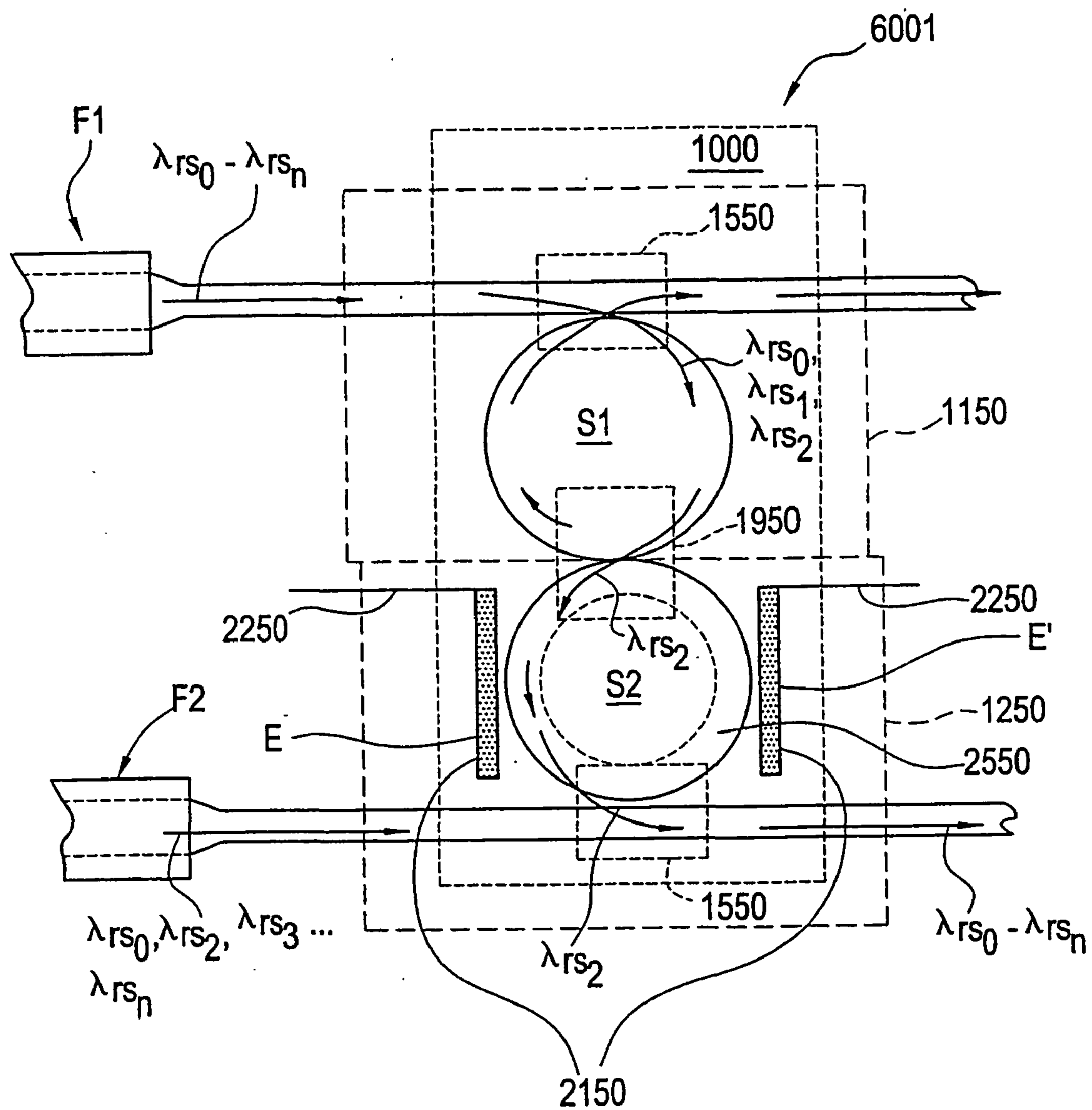


FIG.15



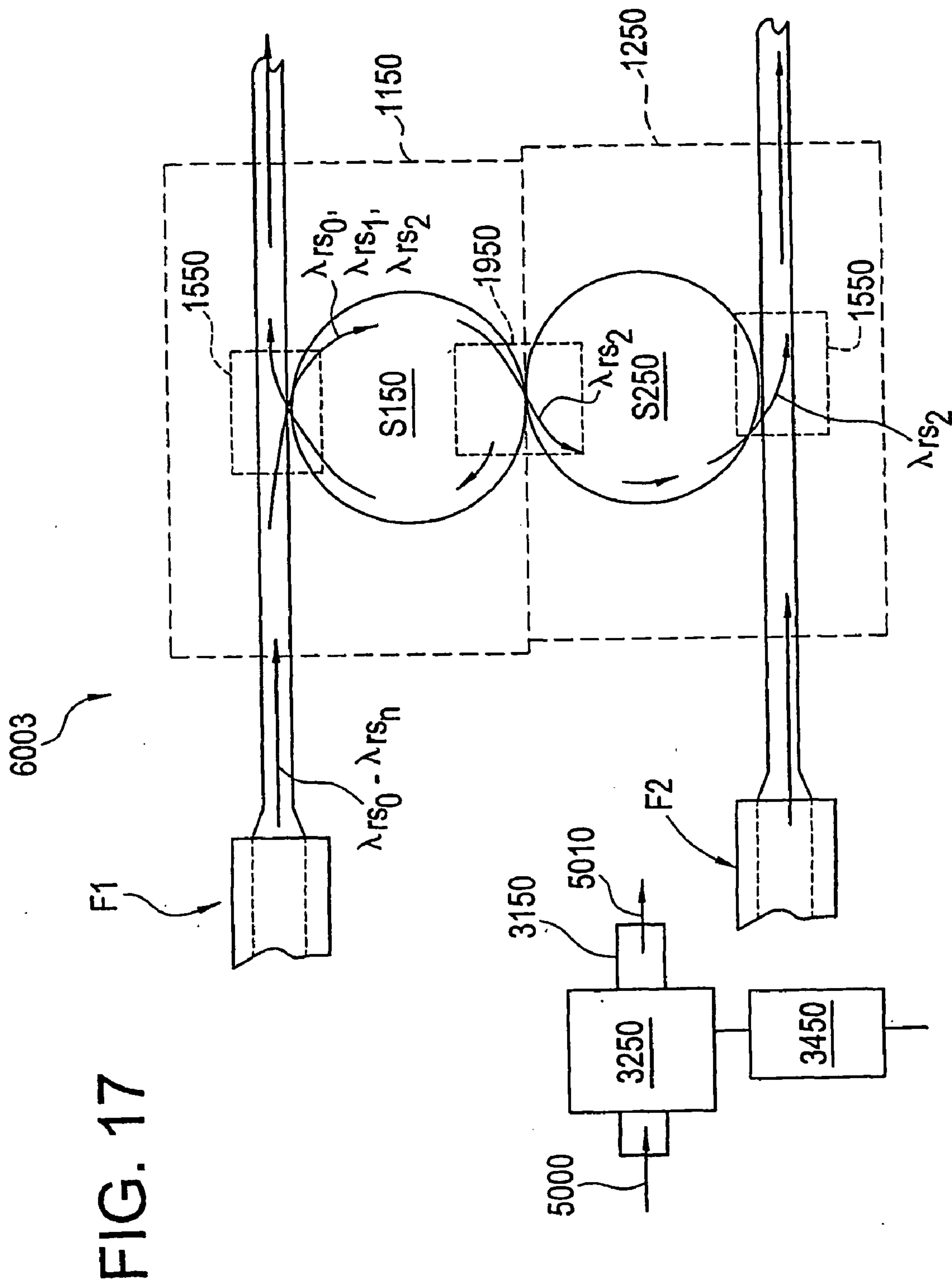


FIG. 18

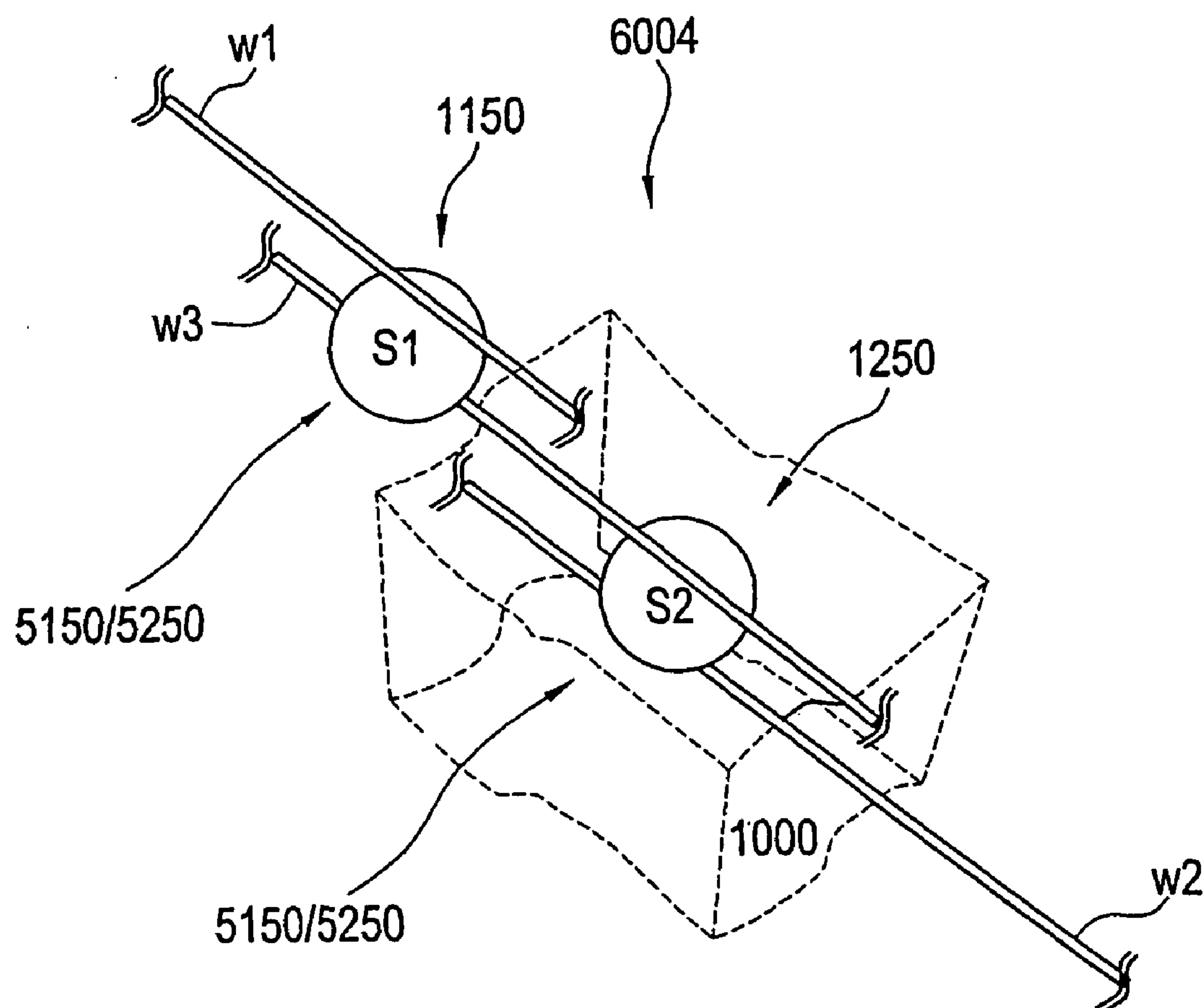


FIG. 19

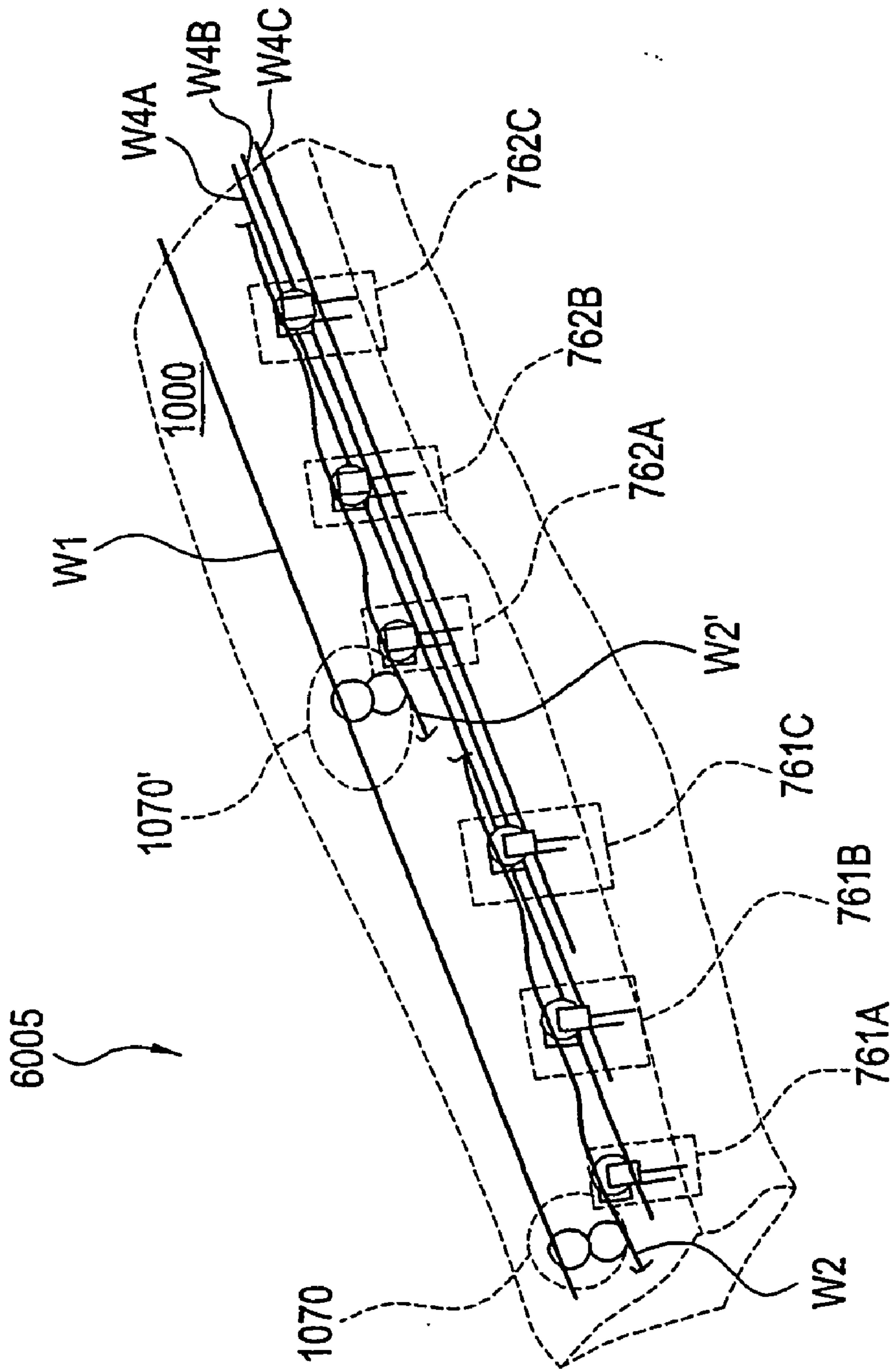


FIG. 20

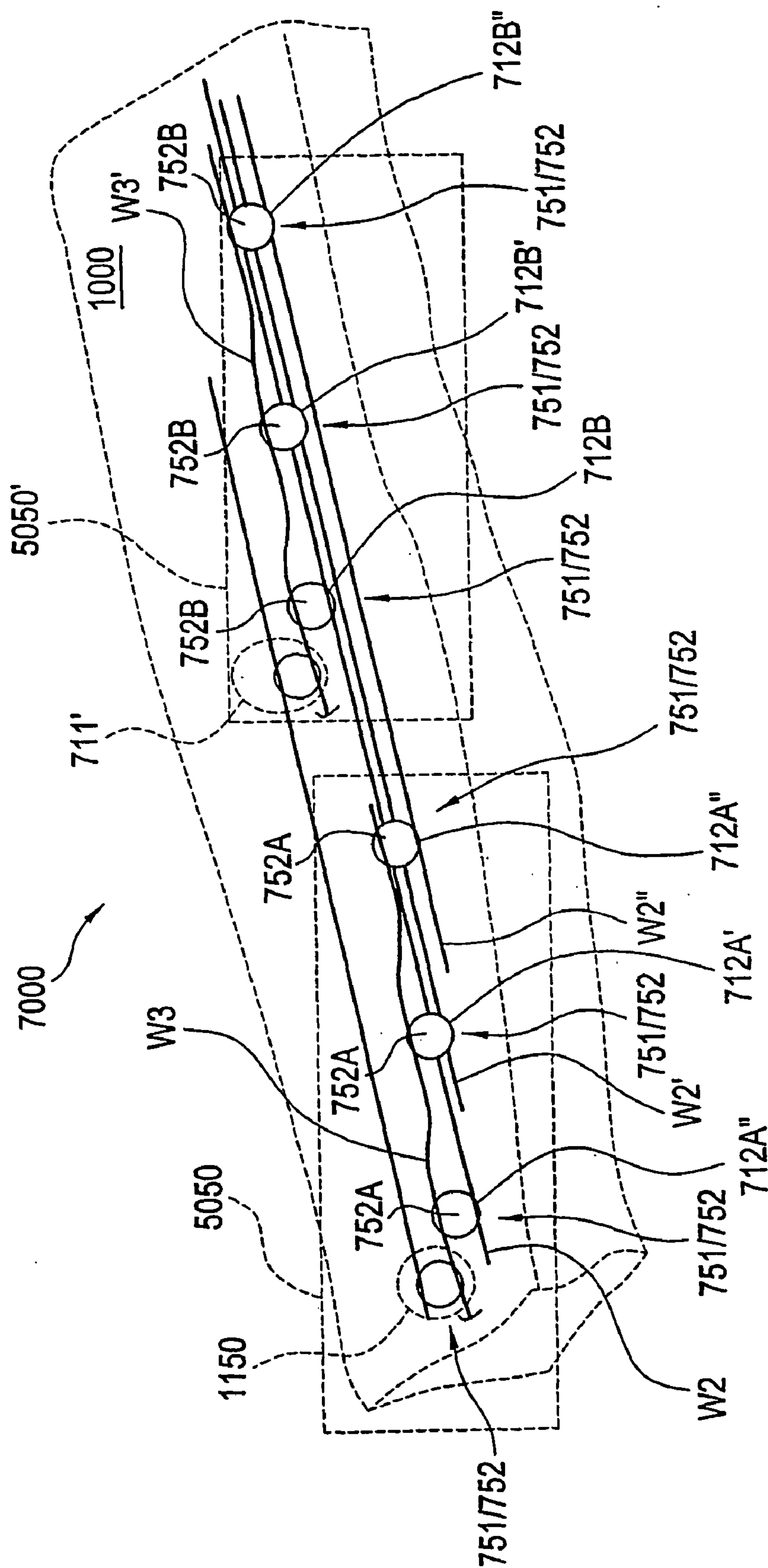


FIG. 21

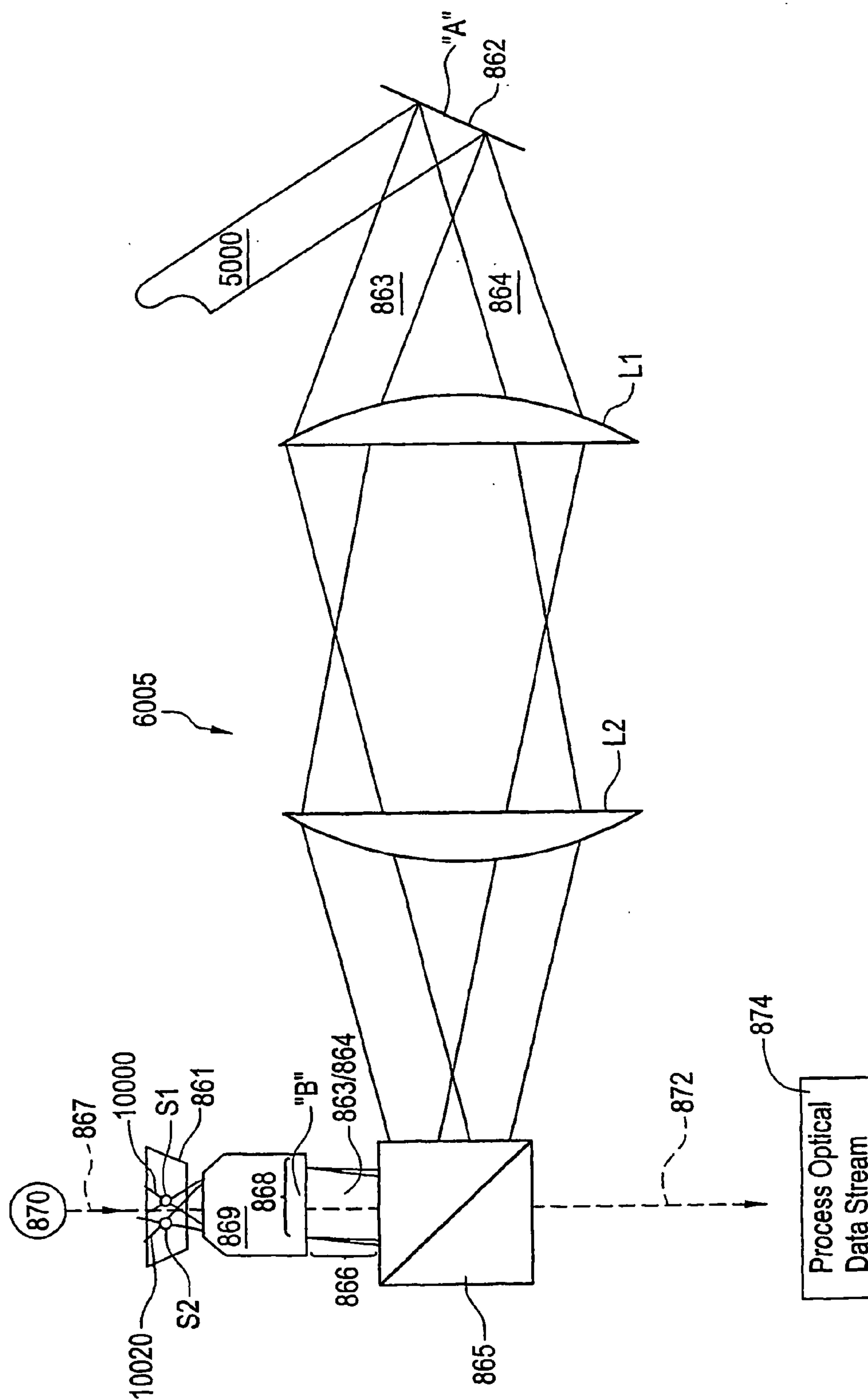


FIG. 22

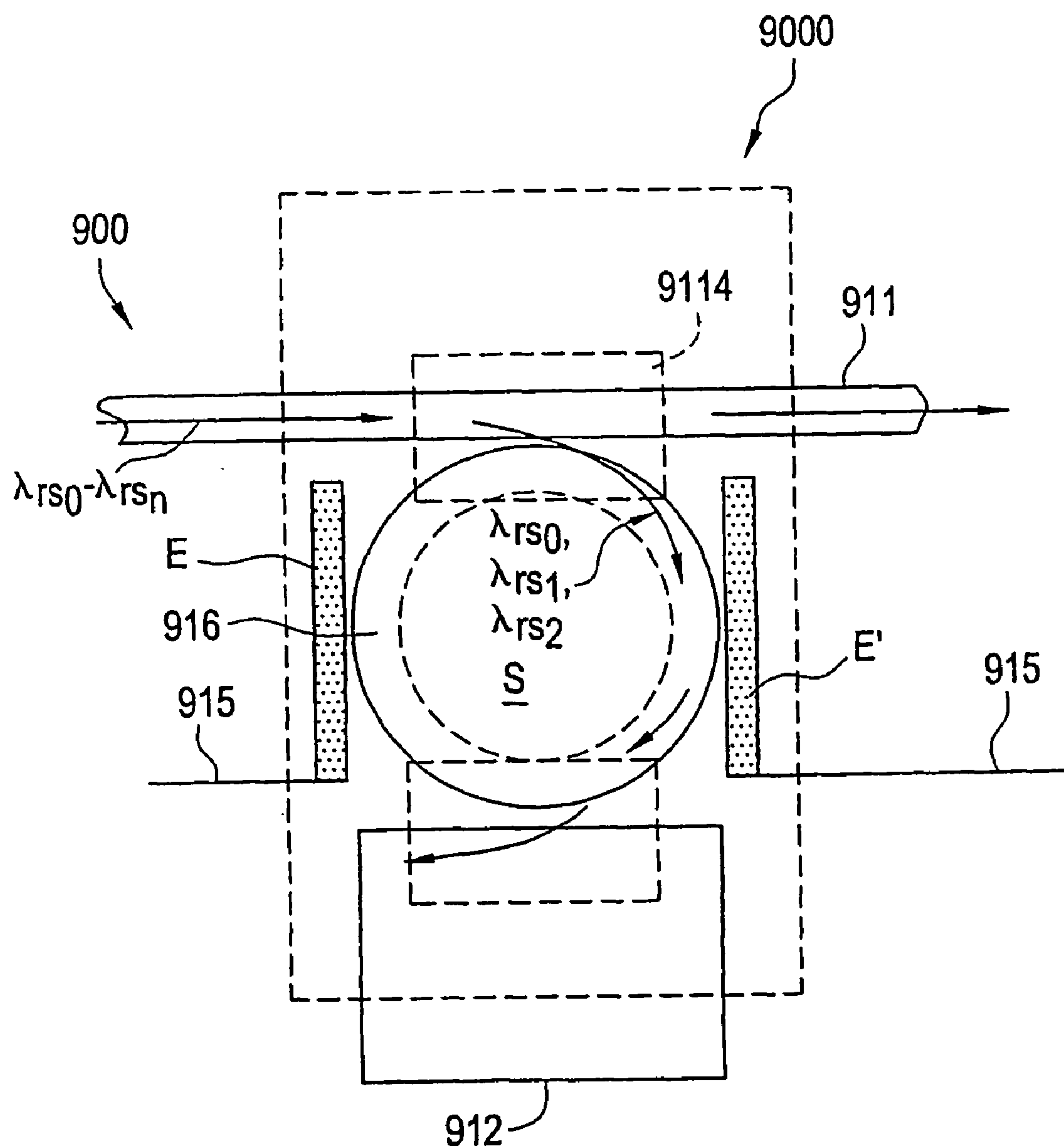


FIG. 23

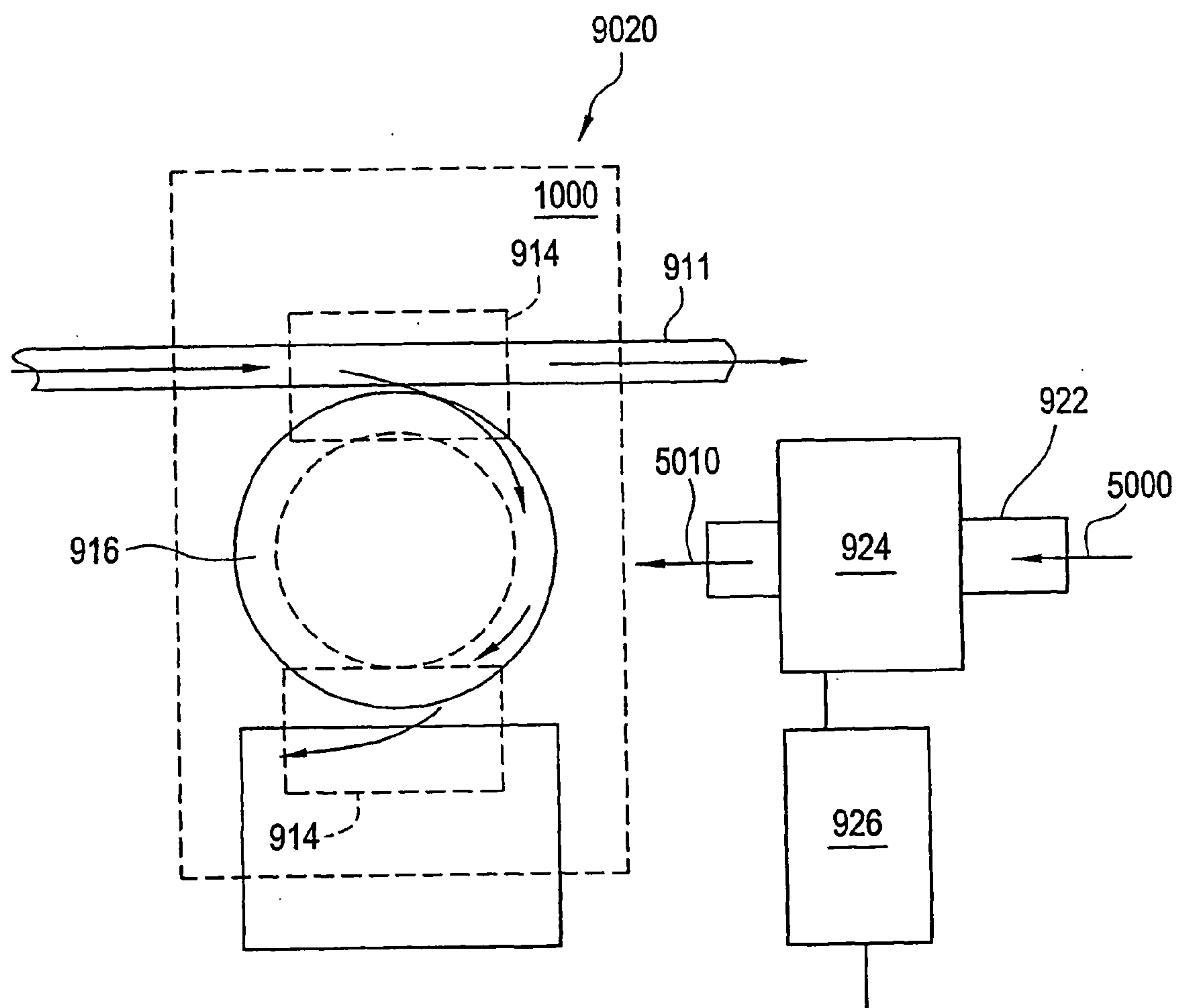


FIG. 24

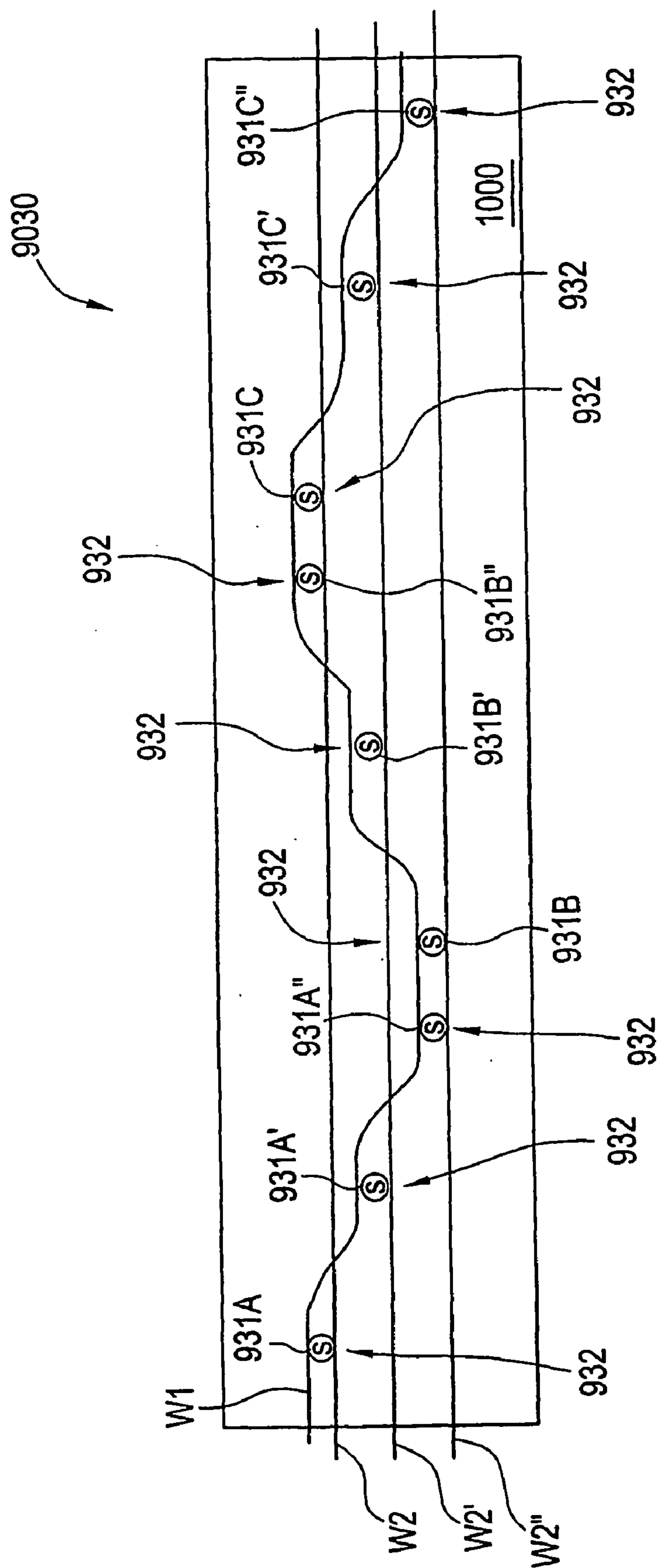


FIG. 25

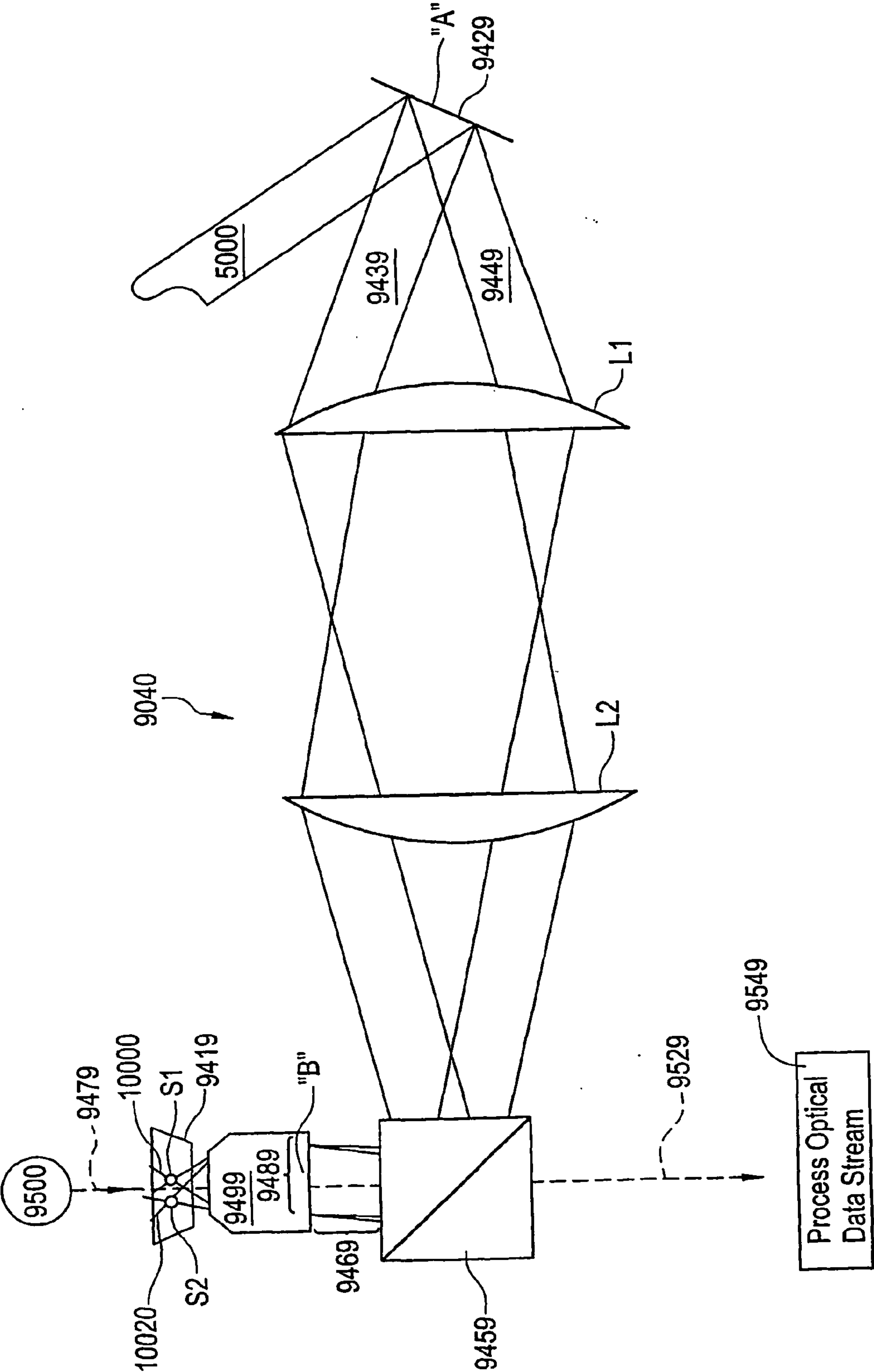


FIG. 26

<u>Dia. Microsphere (MS) 1</u>	<u>Wavelength in C band MS will resonate in WGM for (microns)</u>
200 microns	1.562981
	1.560394
	1.557815
	1.555244
	1.552682
	1.550128
	1.547583
	1.545046
	1.542517
	1.539996
	1.537484
	1.53498
	1.532484
<u>Dia. Microsphere (MS) 2</u>	<u>Wavelength in C band MS will resonate in WGM for (microns)</u>
199.6721 microns	1.563011
	1.560419
	1.557836
	1.555261
	1.552694
	1.550136
	1.547587
	1.545046
	1.542513
	1.539988
	1.537472
	1.534964
	1.532464
<u>Dia. Microsphere (MS) 3</u>	<u>Wavelength in C band MS will resonate in WGM for (microns)</u>
20 microns	1.545046

OPTICAL SWITCHES AND ROUTERS AND OPTICAL FILTERS

[0001] This is a PCT Application which claims priority to U.S. application Ser. No. 09/886,698, filed Jun. 20, 2001, U.S. application Ser. No. 10/118,532, filed Apr. 8, 2002, U.S. application Ser. No. 10/118,531, filed Apr. 8, 2002, U.S. application Ser. No. 10/118,709, filed Apr. 8, 2002, and U.S. application Ser. No. 10/118,760, filed Apr. 8, 2002, the entire contents of which are herein incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Throughout this application various publications are noted. The disclosures of these publications in their entireties are hereby incorporated by reference in this application in order to more fully describe the state of the art to which this invention pertains.

[0003] 1. Field of the Invention

[0004] The present application discloses one or more inventions. The inventions relate generally to optical switching, and in particular, one invention relates to methods, devices and systems to optically switch a specific channel of light between optical fibers. Other inventions generally relate to the “on/off” switching of optical filters, which are specific for a signal in one wavelength or in one channel within a band of signals or band of channels, respectively.

[0005] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0006] Dielectric microspheres are known in the art. It has been shown that a microsphere of the appropriate proportions can form a wavelength specific connection from one optical fiber to another by virtue of the dielectric microsphere’s resonance in a whispering gallery mode (WGM) for the specific wavelength, or for a group of specific wavelengths of light which are the resonate frequencies. The WGM may be used to switch light transmission from one optical fiber to another. Depending on the placement of the microsphere and nature of the optical fibers, fairly high coupling efficiency and light transfer may be achieved. This is disclosed in “Highly Efficient Optical Power Transfer to Whispering Gallery Modes by Use of a Symmetrical Dual Coupling Configuration”, Ming, Cai and Kerry, Vahala, *Opt. Lett* 25, No. 4, 260 (2000).

[0007] Wavelength Division Multiplexing (WDM) is a technique which has been used to enhance the signal capacity of a single mode optical fiber by simultaneously transmitting multiple discreet wavelengths of light, referred to as “channels” in a single band. The wavelengths in each channel are separated by a pre-determined spacing, usually on the order of hundreds of GHz. Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) systems are characterized by closer spacing between the respective wavelengths comprising the channels thereby allowing for a greater number of channels within the same band in the same optical fiber as compared to WDM.

[0008] The speed of routing from one optical fiber to another is limited by the rate at which the optical switching occurs. In the past, switches which convert the optical data to electronic data have been a “bottleneck” in the system. Those acquainted with optical switching will recall that much interest has been shown in achieving the goal of a

direct optical to optical switch which would eliminate the bottleneck caused by the optical to electronic conversions of the past. A variety of devices have been developed in pursuit of achieving this goal.

[0009] Common to many optical to optical switches and optical routers is an all or nothing functionality by which the entire signal, within a channel, is switched or not switched. While useful for small or local networks, especially those networks with easily controlled light sources (lasers), in larger or less controlled environments, an optical router must be able to accept signals from a variety of sources and seamlessly multiplex despite difference in the quality of the signals. Optical switches lacking the ability to monitor, equalize and/or groom the channels in nanoseconds or even picoseconds (which is “real time” for optical transmissions). This may yield turbidity within a band resulting in unbalanced light transmissions (signals) from channel to channel which in turn may cause noise, loss of part of a signal or channels to drop out.

[0010] Accordingly, applicants have identified a need for an optical switch and router that operate in “real time” (which is in the order of nanoseconds or picoseconds) for light transmission. Applicants have also identified a need for an optical router of “real time” optical switches which can monitor, groom, and/or balance a channel relative to the other channels in an optical band.

[0011] Further, with respect to the general field of dielectrics, it has been described by Grier & Dufresne in U.S. Pat. No. 6,055,106 that small dielectric particles may be contained in one or more optical traps. As stated above, optical trapping is known and can be used to contain and manipulate small particles in the submicron to hundreds of micron range.

[0012] Depending on the placement of a WGM microsphere, the nature of the optical fibers, and the diameter or taper of the optical fibers, high efficiency of light transfer may be achieved for the resonate frequencies. See, “*Highly efficient optical power transfer to whispering-gallery modes by use of a symmetrical dual coupling configuration*”, Ming Cai and Kerry Vahala *Opt. LETT* 25, No. 4, 260 (2000); “*Phase-matched excitation of whispering-gallery-mode resonances by a fiber taper*”, J. C. Knight, G. Cheung, F. Jacques, and T.A. Berks, *Opt. LETT* 22, No. 15, 1129 (1997). Particular attention should be paid to **FIG. 2**, and “*Time-domain observation of optical pulse propagation in whispering-gallery modes of glass spheres*”, R. W. Shaw, W. B. Whitten, M. D. Barnes, and J. M. Ramsey, *Opt. LETT* 23, No. 16, 1301 (1998).

[0013] In determining Q for a silica microsphere, physical factors which reduce Q below the limit defined by material losses Q^{-1}_{mat} are the losses attributable to Q^{-1}_{cont} , Q^{-1}_{rad} and $Q^{-1}_{\text{s.s.}}$. Wherein Q^{-1}_{cont} are those losses due to surface contaminants, Q^{-1}_{rad} are those losses attributable to the smallness of the diameter of the microsphere and Q_{ss} represents losses due to scattering caused by surface imperfections. Measurements of losses indicate that if the diameter of a microsphere divided by the wavelength of light it was resonating for is ≥ 15 then Q^{-1}_{rad} is $> -10^{11}$. Additionally, for microspheres larger than 100 microns in diameter $Q^{-1}_{\text{s.s.}}$ is $< < 1 \times 10^{-10}$. “*Ultimate Q of optical microsphere resonators*”, M. L. Gorodetsly, A. A. Savchenkov, and V. S. Ilchenko *Opt. LETT* 21, No. 7, 453-455.

[0014] It has been described by Knight that a microsphere coupled to an optical fiber with a stripped off polymer coating (cladding) over a region of the optical fiber, which has been drawn out in a tapered waist region, can achieve high coupling efficiency in the waist region. Coupling is to the evanescent tail of a signal, extending out into the free space along the region of the optical fiber surrounding the taper. Knight reported a coupling efficiency of a microsphere resonator at a tapered waist region with measurements of Q as high as 5×10^7 .

[0015] One method to taper an optical fiber is to apply heat to an optical fiber and cladding above their respective melting temperatures so that it will stretch, and apply a stretching force. U.S. Pat. No. 5,729,643 issued to Hmelar.

[0016] With respect to WDM, as stated above, the wavelengths in each channel are separated by a pre-determined spacing usually in the order of hundreds of GHz and with transmission rates up to about 10 Gb/s. DWDM systems are characterized by closer spacing in the order of 50 to 12.5 GHz between the respective channels. The closer spacing allows for a greater number of channels within the same band in the same waveguide as compared to WDM, for example 320 DWDM channels at 10 Gb/s yields a 3200 Gb/s fiber capacity as compared to 80 channels at 10 Gb/s which yields an 800 Gb/s fiber capacity.

[0017] In addition to WDM and DWDM, optical networks may increase fiber capacity with time division multiplexing (TDM). TDM can achieve a 3200 Gb/s fiber capacity by combining less channels and faster transmission rates. For example, 80 channels at 40 Gb/s yields the 3200 Gb/s fiber capacity and maintains greater channel spacing by reducing the Bit periods. However, reduction of the Bit period from 10 Gb/s to 40 Gb/s reduces the window through which to measure waveform from 100 picoseconds to leave only a 25 picosecond window. *Photonics Spectra* September 2001, "Faster vs. Denser: Networks Reach Another Crossroads", by Daniel C. McCarthy. Therefore, in WDM, DWDM or TDM optical networks picoseconds switching is "optical real time".

[0018] Accordingly, there exists a need for an optical filter which has the ability to select and switch at least one specific wavelength light signal from among a group of wavelength light signals within an optical transmission band in "optical real time"; and which can filter out in "optical real time" specific wavelength light signals, from among all the different wavelength light signals which may be found within the channels of an optical transmission band.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0019] This application discloses one or more inventions.

[0020] One invention provides novel and improved methods, systems and devices to rapidly (in the range of nanoseconds and even picoseconds) switch a signal between optical fibers by coupling a dielectric microsphere, via whispering gallery mode resonance (WGM) between optical fibers. A selected signal from a particular channel within an optical band can be selectively switched by controlling a plurality of the optical switches. All references made hereinafter to microsphere(s) shall refer to dielectric microsphere(s).

[0021] In all the embodiments of this invention which are shown, the optical router is formed of a series of the optical

switches. Common to the optical switches is a microsphere in proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of a pair of optical fibers. To switch the signal of a particular channel (wavelength of light) between optical fibers, the evanescent waves emanating from the electromagnetic fields associated with the signal traveling in an optical band. A particular channel couples with, and resonates across, a wavelength specific microsphere via the WGM of the microsphere to switch the signal to another optical fiber.

[0022] In one embodiment of the optical router, each microsphere forming an optical switch has a steady state index of refraction "n" and will resonate in WGM for a specific wavelength of light (channel).

[0023] The switching is accomplished by controlling the steady state index of refraction "n" of the microsphere. A microsphere is positioned between optical fibers, with substantially similar indexes of refraction at a region of thinned or removed cladding, suitable optical fibers include those tapered optical fibers identified by Cai & Vahala. A pair of electrodes, placed on either side of each microsphere, can be used to apply a voltage across the microsphere. When an adequate voltage is applied across the electrode pair the steady state index of refraction "n" of the microsphere is altered by the polarizing effect of the voltage on the substrate of the microsphere. The polarization changes the dielectric constant of the substrate which in turn alters the steady state index of refraction "n" of the microsphere. In the case where the steady state index of refraction "n" of the microsphere is substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers the voltage will cause the steady state index of refraction "n" of the microsphere to become sufficiently dissimilar from the index of refraction of the optical fibers thereby tending to preclude WGM resonance.

[0024] To switch a particular optical switch within the optical router the voltage across a selected electrode pair need only be briefly interrupted (in the order of a few nanoseconds to a few picoseconds) to allow the signal to resonate across the microsphere and pass from one optical fiber to another. Accordingly, an optical router useful for WDM, DWDM and wavelength division de-multiplexing is achieved.

[0025] Conversely, by selecting a microsphere with a steady state index of refraction "n" dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers and applying sufficient voltage across the selected electrode pair to alter the steady state index of refraction "n" of the microsphere to be substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers WGM resonance of the microsphere is enabled via the application of the voltage.

[0026] Adjustment of the voltage may also provide for a controllable index of refraction of "n±x," for the microsphere, wherein as "x" approaches zero the efficiency of the transfer of signal approaches the microsphere's maximum coupling efficiency which may be useful for applications such as channel equalizing, grooming and power balancing.

[0027] In another embodiment of the optical router, a plurality of wavelength specific microspheres are provided, each with a light activated material, such as a dye, integrated within their substrate. To form the optical router, a series of optical switches, each one containing a known microsphere selected to resonate in WGM for a specific channel, are

positioned in close proximity to an unclad or thinly clad region in each of two optical fibers.

[0028] Each optical switch operates by controlled irradiation of the microsphere with an appropriately intense beam of light. The irradiation activates the light activated material and depending on the selection of the light activated material and microsphere substrate, the irradiation will either change the dielectric constant of the light activated material and affect the average dielectric constant of the microsphere, or affect the dielectric constant of the light activated material and the substrate, thereby altering the dielectric constant of the microsphere. In either case, the change in the dielectric constant will alter the steady state index of refraction “n” of the microsphere.

[0029] If the steady state index of refraction “n” of the microsphere is substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, the irradiation can be used to alter the steady state index of refraction “n” to become dissimilar to that of the optical fibers and disrupt the WGM resonance. A practical application of such a microsphere would be to maintain an appropriately intense beam of light directed at the microsphere until switching of the channel corresponding to that microsphere is required. A brief interruption in the intense beam of light will result in switching. On the other hand, if the steady state index of refraction “n” of the microsphere is dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, a brief pulse of irradiation can be used to alter the index of refraction “n” of the microsphere to become substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers and thereby switch the channel by enabling the WGM resonance.

[0030] In either case, by pulsing the intense beam of light, “on” or “off” in the range of nanoseconds to picoseconds, switching can occur in nanoseconds or picoseconds. One pulse mechanism which operates in the nanosecond and picosecond range is passing the intense beam of light through a Mach-Zender interferometer.

[0031] Moreover, adjustment of the intensity of the intense beam of light, in either case, may also provide for a controllable index of refraction of “ $n \pm x$,” for the microsphere, wherein as “x” approaches zero, the efficiency of the transfer of signal approaches the microsphere’s maximum obtainable coupling efficiency which may be useful for applications such as channel equalizing, grooming and power balancing.

[0032] In another embodiment of an optical router, each microsphere comprising a specific optical switch has a steady state index of refraction “n” which always corresponds to the index of refraction of the optical fibers. Optical switching occurs when the selected microsphere is physically contained within an optical trap and moved towards the unclad or thinly clad regions of two optical fibers. At some proximity from the optical fibers the evanescent wave associated with the signal of the selected channel will resonate across the surface of the selected microsphere and switch signal one optical fiber to another optical fiber. When the switching is completed, the optical trap is withdrawn and the microsphere ceases to couple to the fibers.

[0033] Adjustment of the proximity of the microsphere to the stripped or thinly clad region of the optical fibers may provide a controllable index of refraction of “ $n \pm x$ ” for the

microsphere, wherein as “x” approaches zero, the efficiency of the transfer of signal approaches the microsphere’s maximum obtainable coupling efficiency which may be useful for applications such as channel equalizing, grooming and power balancing.

[0034] In each embodiment the switching and/or routing of the selected wavelength of light signal from one optical fiber to another is dependent on the propagation of an evanescent wave corresponding to a microsphere which acts in a WGM for the selected wavelength of signal. The switching “on” or “off” of the microsphere is either by physical movement or by altering the microsphere’s steady state index of refraction “n”.

[0035] Yet other inventions disclosed in this application relate to methods, apparatuses, and systems, to filter at least one specific wavelength light signal from among a group of light signals within the different channels of an optical transmission band in “optical real time”.

[0036] In one of the inventions, the optical filter uses a WGM resonate structure to filter out a specific wavelength light signal or a group of specific wavelength light signals, and a WGM control, or signal loss central to switch “on/off” the optical filter. If a WGM control is used to switch the optical filter “on/off”, it is performed by blending the WGM resonate structure into the medium surrounding it without optical/electrical conversion. Further, a single small WGM resonate structure is used to resonate in WGM for which the only resonate signal “RS” is within the optical transmission band being filtered.

[0037] In another of the inventions, the optical filter is formed by placing a WGM resonate structure proximate to both an input waveguide from which it can receive input light signal transmissions and an output waveguide to receive the filtered light signal transmission. The optical filter is switched “on/off” by controlled signal absorption within a WGM resonate structure.

[0038] In yet another of the inventions, the optical filter is formed by connecting two or more subfilters, each containing a resonate structure. The optical filter is placed proximate to an input waveguide from which it can receive input light signal transmissions. The filter can provide an output consisting of a specific wavelength light signal transmission to an output waveguide. The optical filter of this invention may be always “on” or switched “on/off”.

[0039] Specifically, the first subfilter structure is the “gate keeper” and the second is the “isolator”. Both the isolator and the gate keeper contain resonate structures which can resonate in WGM for a specific group of wavelengths of light known as resonate signals “RS” (See the table shown in FIG. 27). The filter results from having but a single RS, within an optical transmission band, common to the gate keeper and the isolator.

[0040] All references made herein to resonant structures shall be understood to include those structures constructed of a dielectric material including all materials with a non-zero dielectric constant which are not conductors. Preferably the selected dielectric material is non-magnetic. In some instances, depending on the parameters of the system, one of the two or more resonate structures may be a resonate cavity. For simplicity, and not as a limitation, microspheres are described and shown as the resonate structure in the detailed

descriptions. However, it should be understood that any suitable resonate structure is anticipated and combinations of different and varying structures constructed of any suitable material and in differing and varying numbers than those depicted are also anticipated.

[0041] All references made hereinafter to waveguides shall be understood to be any structure adapted for transmitting an optical signal in a longitudinal direction which provided for limited loss of the optical signal during transmission. Waveguides shall be understood to be any structure adapted for the propagation of light signals in a longitudinal direction. A waveguide, as used herein, is a structure which provides an evanescent wave, corresponding to the propagating light waves.

[0042] A specific size resonate structure will resonate in WGM for a specific group of RS which corresponds to its effective size " d_e ". Effective size is a function of actual distance the light must travel to complete a round trip within the resonate structure, represented as " d ", multiplied by the index of refraction of the resonate structure " n_{rs} ". This relationship of d to d_e is described in the first equation:

$$d_e = n_{rs} * d \quad \text{Equation 1:}$$

[0043] For a dielectric microsphere resonate structure, the wavelengths of each RS which a resonate structure (such as a gate keeper or isolator) constructed of a specific size dielectric microsphere will resonate for in WGM can be found by dividing the effective distance the light will travel in the microsphere by a non-zero integer " q " as shown in the second equation:

$$d_e / RS = q \quad \text{Equation 2:}$$

and $d_e / q = RS$

[0044] Accordingly, the group of wavelengths of light ($\lambda_0, \lambda_1, \lambda_2, \dots, \lambda_n$) which are the RS can be calculated. Further, as the fixed diameter of a resonate structure is reduced the number of RS are reduced (see table in FIG. 27). The cost of this reduction in RS is to increase the signal losses due to Q^{-1} rad. However, by surrounding the resonate structure with the appropriate medium signal losses due to Q^{-1} rad may be reduced. The appropriate medium should be one which has an index of refraction " n_{medium} " which is adequately distinct from n_{rs} to establish the condition of total internal reflection at the interface between the resonate structure and the medium.

[0045] Therefore, after identifying the signals within an optical telecommunications band (in an input waveguide) for which optical switching may be required (to an output waveguide), the appropriate WGM resonate structures to switch the identified signals can be selected to construct an optical filter. A group of " n " such optical filters may be combined to multiplex (MUX) or demultiplex (DEMUX) different wavelength optical signals, within different channels of an optical transmission band from a single waveguide to one or more other waveguides or vice versa, thereby optically cross connecting waveguides. Further, a group of " n " such optical filters may be combined to demultiplex a group of " n " signals from an input waveguide to one or more of " m " output waveguides. Additionally, a group of " n " filters can be used to multiplex the signals within " m " input waveguides into a single output waveguide.

[0046] In one of the inventions the optical filter may be always "on", or switched "on/off". "On/off" switching may be through one of two WGM controls or through a controlled signal loss. The controlled signal loss may be achieved by altering the imaginary portion " $i\epsilon_2$ " of the dielectric constant of the resonate structure ϵ_{rs} (see below).

[0047] In one of the inventions, the optical filter is switched "on/off" through a WGM control. The WGM control as illustrated is applied to several configurations in the detailed description of the preferred embodiments. The methodology of the WGM control is applicable to dielectric resonate structures in general. Accordingly, application of the WGM controls to other dielectric resonate structures, which support WGM resonance for signals within an optical transmission or optical telecommunication band, is within the intended scope of the inventions.

[0048] In either the always "on" or the switched "on/off" case the selected resonate structure should have a minimum "Q" (quality factor) adequate to discern the separate channels as spaced in the optical transmission or telecommunication band supplying the signals to be filtered.

[0049] Examples of commonly referenced channel spacing structures found in a TDM, WDM and DWDM are as great as several hundred GHz or as narrow as 12.5 GHz. For 100 GHz spacing the minimum Q needed to maintain channel separation is about 2000. For 50 GHz spacing the minimum Q is about 4000 and for 12.5 GHz channel spacing the minimum Q is about 16,000.

[0050] "On/Off" Switching Control Through the WGM Control Cases

[0051] The first WGM control is used to switch "on/off" the filter through an adjustment of n_{rs} to establish conditions which either support or do not support WGM resonance for the desired RS.

[0052] Mechanisms for adjusting n_{rs} include polarization of the resonant structure by an applied voltage or current causing a linear electro-optic effect or by an applied beam of light causing an optical effect. Those skilled in the art will recall that a dielectric structure has a dielectric constant " ϵ ". The dielectric constant of a resonate structure " ϵ_{rs} " can be described as the sum of a "real" portion " ϵ_1 " and an imaginary portion " $i\epsilon_2$ " as described in the third equation.

$$\epsilon_{rs} = (\epsilon_1 + i\epsilon_2) \quad \text{Equation 3:}$$

[0053] For those instances wherein $i\epsilon_2$ is small and remains unchanged, the index of refraction of the resonate structure n_{rs} is known to be proportional to the square root of the "real" portion of the resonate structure dielectric constant $\sqrt{\epsilon_1}$. Accordingly, n_{rs} can be altered through a controlled change of ϵ_1 achieved by polarization. Further, from the first equation it is known that when " d " remains fixed and n_{rs} changes, d_e will change. Further, from the second equation it is known that the RS are a function of d_e/q and if d_e changes, a corresponding change in RS the resonate structure will resonate in WGM.

[0054] ϵ_1 can also be controlled by coating to the resonate structure with an optically active material such as molecules of liquid crystal, organic photorefractive polymers, GaAs, Nitrobenzene and LiNbO₃ which, upon application of a predetermined linear electro optic effect or optical effect, will alter the index of refraction of the coating material

which, for purposes of effecting WGM resonance in a resonate structure, is the index of refraction of that portion of the resonate structure which is involved in the WGM resonance. A group of filters can be combined to multiplex or demultiplex a band of optical signals via optical cross sections.

[0055] The second WGM control is used to switch “on/off” the optical filter based on an adjustment of n_{rs} of the resonate structure relative to the index of refraction of a medium “ n_{medium} ” surrounding at least one resonate structure waveguide interface, or at least that portion of the resonate structure at a region where coupling occurs, to establish conditions which either interrupt or encourage signal coupling or the coupling of light transmissions between the resonate structure or subfilters and the input and/or the output waveguide(s).

[0056] The mechanisms for adjusting the n_{rs} is the same type of linear electro optic effects and/or optical effects used in the first WGM control. However, the adjustment in the n_{rs} is to effectively blend the resonate structure into the medium.

[0057] The third WGM control is used to switch “on/off” the filter through an adjustment of the index of refraction of at least one of the resonate structures. The index of refraction of the resonate structure within the gate keeper subfilter, denoted “ $n_{rs}^{(gate\ keeper)}$ ” and the index of refraction of the resonate structure within the isolator subfilter denoted “ $n_{rs}^{(isolator)}$ ” establishes conditions which either support or do not support WGM resonance for at least the desired RS.

[0058] If, for example, the adjusted n_{rs} corresponds to an n_{rs} which supports WGM resonance for RS which are outside the telecommunications band or for a group of RS with no common signal between the gate keeper and isolator, the signal will not switch through the optical filter. However, if the adjusted n_{rs} supports WGM resonance for RS within the telecommunications band, one of which is also a RS of the gate keeper and isolator, the common RS will switch through the filter.

[0059] Mechanisms for adjusting $n_{rs}^{(gate\ keeper)}$ or $n_{rs}^{(isolator)}$ include polarization of the resonant structure by an applied voltage or current causing a linear electro-optic effect or by an applied beam of light causing an optical effect.

[0060] The fourth WGM control is used to switch “on/off” the optical filter based on an adjustment of $n_{rs}^{(gate\ keeper)}$ or $n_{rs}^{(isolator)}$ relative to the index of refraction of a medium “ n_{medium} ” surrounding at least one resonate structure waveguide interface, to establish conditions which either interrupt or encourage signal coupling between the subfilters and the input and/or the output waveguide(s). The mechanisms for adjusting the n_{rs} is the same type of linear electro optic effects and/or optical effects used in the first WGM control. However, the adjustment in the n_{rs} is to effectively blend the resonate structure into the medium.

[0061] “On/Off” Switching Control Through Signal Loss

[0062] When a light signal is within a WGM resonate structure controlled signal loss may be achieved, as noted in Equation 3, by altering the imaginary portion “ $i\epsilon_2$ ” of the dielectric constant of the resonate structure.

[0063] The mechanism of signal loss is to alter $i\epsilon_2$, through the absorption of signal (light) by triggering the action of light absorbing material within the substrate of resonate structure. The attenuation mechanism may take place in concert with optical switching, or separate therefrom. By controlling only the imaginary portion “ $i\epsilon_2$ ” of “ ϵ_{rs} ”, and because the geometrical configuration of the resonant structure is unchanged, the resonant structure will continue to support the same RS. However, internal to the resonant structure, an absorption mechanism converts the RS mode light to other forms of energy besides the specific mode of the RS which it previously supported.

[0064] “On/off” switching of the filter through signal loss via the control of $i\epsilon_2$ does not require a change in signal coupling the RS. Therefore, the dynamics of the coupling of the resonate structure to the light transmissions (signals) at the resonate structure-waveguide interface need not be altered.

[0065] The light absorbing material may be dihydroindolizines, diarylimylenes, ScGe, bis-Mienylperfluorocyclopentenes, spiropyrenes, fulgides, quantum dots, doped semiconductor nanoclusters, PDLC, dyes, semiconductor nanoclusters, electrochromic nanocrystals, semiconductor nanocrystals, (nanocrystals have been shown to exhibit controlled IR light/signal absorption in response to an applied potential) “*Electrochromic Nanocrystal Quantum Dots*”, Congiun Wang, Moonsub Shim, Philippe Guyot-Sionnest, *SCIENCE* Vol. 291 page 2390 Mar. 23, 2001) or photochromic compounds such as photochromic bithienylethene which can be incorporated into the substrate of the resonate structure and selectively activated by applying the appropriate quantity and/or quality of a trigger light or energy to cause absorption of signal. “*Optical properties and dynamics of a photochromic bithienylethene in solution and in a polymer film*”, J. C. Owrutsky, H. H. Nelson, A. P. Baronavski, O-K Kim, G. M. Tsivgoulis, S. L. Gilat and J.-M. Lehn *Chemical Physical Letters* 293 555-563.(1998).

[0066] The resonate structures described herein may be as small as a few microns. One method for positioning these small resonate structures is through the generation and control of movable of optical traps (as described by Grier et al in: U.S. Pat. No. 6,055,106) which can trap, contain, position and hold small dielectric particles.

[0067] The above inventions may be employed in any application where the signal transmitted by the resonant structure is to be controlled thereby. For example, in an assay format, the resonant structure may be manufactured or modified post-manufacture by coating with a binding agent which binds to an analyte to be detected in a sample. In this invention, the presence of the analyte is detected by a change in frequency, attenuation or destruction of the resulting signal which comes about because of the binding of the analyte to the binding agent on the resonant structure upon exposure to the sample. Such a change in frequency, attenuation or destruction of the resulting signal may also be accomplished in a biological assay by competing away an analyte bound to a binding agent on the resonant structure prior to exposure to the sample. Examples of binding agent/analyte pairs include antigen/antibody, antibody/antigen, ligand/receptor, receptor/ligand, and nucleic acid/nucleic acid. Complexing agents, chelating agents and chemical bonding agents may also be employed.

[0068] Other features and advantages of the present invention will be set forth, in part, in the descriptions which follow and the accompanying drawings, wherein the preferred embodiments of the present invention are described and shown, and, in part, will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon examination of the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, or may be learned by practice of the present invention. The advantages of the present invention may be realized and attained by means of the instrumentalities and combinations particularly pointed out in the appendant claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0069] **FIG. 1** illustrates a component view of an optical router according to one invention.

[0070] **FIG. 2A** illustrates an alternate embodiment of an optical router.

[0071] **FIG. 2B** illustrates a diagram of a component optical switch of the embodiment of **FIG. 2A**.

[0072] **FIG. 3A** illustrates a partial perspective view of an alternate embodiment for an optical router.

[0073] **FIG. 3B** illustrates a cut away view along the line A-A of the embodiment of **FIG. 3A** showing an optical switch of the router in the “off” position.

[0074] **FIG. 3C** illustrates a cut away view along the line A-A of the embodiment of **FIG. 3A** showing an optical switch of the router in the “on” position.

[0075] **FIG. 4** is a diagram of the optical router and components to generate optical traps of **FIG. 3A**.

[0076] **FIG. 5** illustrates a component view of an optical switch and filter according to another invention.

[0077] **FIG. 6** illustrates a component view of an electronically gated optical switch and filter.

[0078] **FIG. 7** illustrates a component view an optically gated optical switch and filter.

[0079] **FIG. 8** illustrates a component view of a signal loss optical switch and filter.

[0080] **FIG. 9** illustrates a component view of a DEMUX system.

[0081] **FIG. 10** illustrates an optical trapping system to manipulate optical switch components.

[0082] **FIG. 11A** illustrates a component view of an optical filter according to another invention.

[0083] **FIG. 11B** illustrates a component view of an optical filter according to another invention.

[0084] **FIG. 12** illustrates a component view of a demultiplexing system.

[0085] **FIG. 13** illustrates an optical trapping system to manipulate optical switch components.

[0086] **FIG. 14** illustrates a component view of an optical filter according to another invention.

[0087] **FIG. 15** illustrates a component view of an electronically gated optical filter.

[0088] **FIG. 16** illustrates a component view an optically gated optical filter.

[0089] **FIG. 17** illustrates a component view of a signal loss switched optical filter.

[0090] **FIG. 18** illustrates a component view of an optical filter with an intermediary optical fiber.

[0091] **FIG. 19** illustrates a component view of a system of filters used to demultiplex.

[0092] **FIG. 20** illustrates a component view of an alternate embodiment of filters used to demultiplex.

[0093] **FIG. 21** illustrates an optical trapping system to manipulate optical switch components.

[0094] **FIG. 22** illustrates a component view of an electronically gated filter according to another invention.

[0095] **FIG. 23** illustrates a component view of an optically gated optical filter.

[0096] **FIG. 24** illustrates a component view of a demultiplexing system.

[0097] **FIG. 25** illustrates an optical trapping system to manipulate optical switch components.

[0098] **FIG. 26** is a table showing a relationship between microsphere diameter and WGM resonate signals.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0099] Certain terminology will be used in the following specification for convenience and reference, and not as a limitation. Brief definitions are provided below:

[0100] A. An “evanescent wave” refers to a wave that occurs when a wave enters a region in which it cannot propagate. Typically such waves are characterized by an amplitude which decreases exponentially with distance into the region in which the wave cannot propagate.

[0101] B. “WGM” refers to the whispering gallery mode, which is a property of resonate structures that can be used to form a wavelength specific optical conduit between one or more optical fibers and the resonate structure via evanescent waves.

[0102] C. “Beamlet” refers to a sub-beam of light or other source of energy that is generated by directing a light or other source of energy, such as that produced by a laser or collimated output from a light emitting diode, through a medium which diffracts it into two or more sub-beams. An example of a beamlet would be a higher order laser beam diffracted off of a grating.

[0103] D. “Phase profile” refers to the phase of light or other source of energy in a cross-section of a beam or a beamlet.

[0104] E. “Phase patterning” refers to a patterned phase shift imparted to a beam of light, or a beamlet which alters its phase profile, including, but not limited to, phase modulation, mode forming, splitting, diffracting, converging, diverging, shaping and otherwise steering a beam or a beamlet.

[0105] F. An “optical fiber” refers generally to an elongated structure of nominally circular cross section comprised of a “core” of relatively high refractive index material surrounded by a “cladding” of lower refractive index material, adapted for transmitting an optical mode in the longitudinal direction.

[0106] G. “WDM” refers generally to wavelength division multiplexing: a system capable of simultaneously transmitting data on several wavelength channels.

[0107] H. “DWDM” refers generally to dense wavelength division multiplexing: a system capable of simultaneously transmitting data on several wavelength channels with less spacing between the channels than in a WDM system.

[0108] Although dielectric microspheres, which resonate in WGM for a group of resonate signals “RS”, are described herein and shown in the figures, the illustrations should not be considered a limitation. Those skilled in the art will recognize that any resonant structure which supports a Q above the minimum Q required to maintain separation of the channels in the optical transmission band (the range of wavelengths in the “C” band are from about 1530 to 1565 nms, and in the “L” band are from about 1570 to 1620 nms) being filtered and/or switched, which may include structures such as stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, or discs could be used in place of, or in conjunction with, dielectric microspheres.

[0109] In one invention regarding an optical router, in the preferred embodiments, an optical router is formed of a series of optical switches. Common to the optical switches is the placement of a microsphere in proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of a pair of optical fibers to achieve coupling of the microsphere to the optical fibers. To switch the signal from a particular channel (specific wavelength of light), between optical fibers, the WGM resonance of the microsphere for evanescent waves emanating from the electromagnetic fields associated with the signal in the particular channel is controlled either by altering the placement of the microsphere or by altering the steady state index of refraction “n” of the microsphere.

[0110] To form the optical router 10 illustrated in FIG. 1, a series of optical switches 14, 16 and 18 are connected across a first and a second optical fiber F1 and F2. The optical router 10, by virtue of the optical switches, is capable of optically routing a number of different channels within an optical band. Each channel contains a signal comprised of a distinct wavelength of light. Hence, the quantity of optical switches within the router 10 will define the number of different channels that router 10 can switch.

[0111] Each optical switch 12, 14 and 16 consists of a microsphere S1, S2 or S3 positioned between an electrode pair E & E' and placed in close proximity to a region of thinned or stripped cladding 20 on each optical fiber F1 & F2. Voltage is supplied to each electrode pair E & E' via corresponding pairs of conductive leads 22, 24 and 26 which are attached to a power supply (not shown).

[0112] The channel specific functionality of each optical switch derives from the selection of appropriately sized microspheres. Appropriate size refers to the radius of the microsphere wherein π times the radius of the microsphere

is approximately an integral $\frac{1}{2}$ wavelength of the wavelength of light the microsphere, with its steady state index of refraction “n” resonates for in WGM. Therefore, each microsphere by virtue of its size can be selected to correspond to a single channel carried within the optical band.

[0113] In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the microspheres are selected with a steady state index of refraction “n” substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers F1 & F2. Or, stated in terms of optical switches, each microsphere is switched “on” and will operate in a WGM for an evanescent wave, emanating from an optical fiber, of a channel with a signal corresponding to the wavelength of light the given microsphere resonates for. Therefore, absent an adequate voltage across the electrodes pairs E & E', switching of the signals from three channels, corresponding to the wavelengths of light each microsphere S1, S2 and S3 resonates for, will occur via the WGM resonance of each of the three microspheres S1, S2 and S3.

[0114] To achieve selected routing of signals within a channel adequate voltage across each electrode pair E & E' should be maintained until the switching of a specific channel is desired. The effect of applying adequate voltage across the electrode pairs E & E' is to alter the steady state index of refraction “n” of each microsphere S1-S3 by polarizing the substrate forming the microspheres. The polarization will change the dielectric constant of the substrate which in turn alters the steady state index of refraction “n” making it sufficiently dissimilar from the index of refraction of the optical fibers to preclude WGM resonance and switching will not occur.

[0115] When switching of a channel is desired, the voltage across a particular electrode pair E & E' surrounding the selected microsphere S1, S2 or S3 is briefly terminated. During that brief termination the index of refraction “n” the microsphere return to its steady state, which is substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers F1 & F2, thereby switching and routing the appropriate channel.

[0116] Conversely, one may select microspheres which have a steady state index of refraction “n” substantially dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers F1 & F2, whereby the presence of adequate voltage across an electrode pair E & E' alters the index of refraction “n” of the select microsphere to become substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers F1 & F2, thereby switching and routing the appropriate channel. In either case the switching “on” or “off” of the voltage across the electrodes E & E' can be accomplished in the range of nanoseconds or even picoseconds, providing a system which can route a channel in real time. Any residual light transmission in a switched optical fiber may, as is commonly the case, be removed with an attenuator 28.

[0117] For a given channel, adjustment of the voltage may also provide for a controllable index of refraction of “n+x,” for the microsphere, wherein as “x” approaches zero, the efficiency of the transfer of signal approaches the microsphere’s maximum obtainable coupling efficiency which may be useful for applications such as channel equalizing, grooming and power balancing.

[0118] In FIG. 1, for clarity, only three microspheres S1, S2 & S3 are shown and three electrode pairs 22, 24 & 26. However, it should be understood that a plurality of such

microspheres and electrodes corresponding to the number of channels the router **10** switches can be provided. It should also be understood, that one skilled in the art may combine both the microspheres which have a steady state index of refraction “*n*” substantially similar to the optical fibers and those microspheres that have a steady state index of refraction “*n*” which is dissimilar to the optical fibers into one router without departing from the intended scope of this invention.

[0119] Illustrated in **FIGS. 2A and 2B** is another embodiment of the optical router **30** and optical switches **31**. In this embodiment a plurality of microspheres **S1-S7** are placed in close proximity to a first optical fiber **F1** and a second optical fiber **F2**. The cladding **32** of the optical fibers **F1** & **F2** is thinned or removed at the region of close proximity **34**. Within the substrate of each microsphere is a light activated material, such as a dye, which can alter the steady state index of refraction “*n*” of the microspheres when adequately irradiated by an intense beam of light.

[0120] Each optical switch operates by the WGM resonance of a microsphere, which may be controlled by altering the index of refraction “*n*” of the microsphere, such that the evanescent waves emanating from the electromagnetic fields associated with a signal in a particular channel within one optical fiber resonates in WGM across the surface of the selected microsphere to a channel in another the optical fiber.

[0121] Depending on the selection of the light activated material and the material comprising the substrate of the microsphere, the irradiation will either change the dielectric constant of the light activated material and thereby effect the average dielectric constant of the microsphere, or the irradiation will effect the dielectric constant of the light activated material and the substrate thereby altering the dielectric constant of the microsphere. In both cases the change in the dielectric constant will alter the steady state index of refraction “*n*” of the microsphere.

[0122] Generally, the size of each microsphere **S1-S7** corresponds to the wavelength of light (channel) the microsphere can effectively resonate for in WGM. Therefore, an optical router **30** with seven distinctly sized microspheres forming seven optical switches **31** can route up to seven channels. The exemplary number of microspheres should not be viewed as a limitation on the number of microspheres which may be placed within a router of the invention. Control of the optical routing is accomplished by controlling the optical switches **31**, which in turn is accomplished by altering the steady state index of refraction “*n*” of a selected microsphere within a selected optical switch **31**, by either irradiation of the microsphere with an intense beam of light or by briefly terminating such irradiation.

[0123] In a “dissimilar” configuration the steady state index of refraction “*n*” of the microspheres **S1-S7** is substantially dissimilar to the index of refraction of optical fibers **F1** & **F2**. To optically couple the given microsphere and thereby switch signal between optical fibers **F1** & **F2**, an adequately intense beam of light directed at the appropriate microsphere in the optical router **30** will alter the steady state index of refraction “*n*” of the microsphere to become substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers **F1** & **F2** thereby switching signal between optical fibers via WGM resonance.

[0124] In a “similar” configuration the steady state index of refraction “*n*” of the microsphere is substantially similar to the index of refraction of optical fibers **F1** & **F2**. To optically couple a given microsphere and thereby switch signal between optical fibers **F1** & **F2** the adequately intense beam of light directed at the selected microspheres within the router **30** is terminated, thereby allowing the index of refraction “*n*” of the microsphere to return to its steady state which is substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers **F1** & **F2**, and switching signal between optical fibers via WGM resonance will occur.

[0125] The irradiation of the microspheres **S1-S7** within the optical switches **31** of the optical router **30** may be accomplished with a laser beam **36a** & **36b** passing through an illuminating fiber **37**. For each optical switch **31** (**FIG. 2B**) the laser beam **36a** passes through a Mach-Zender interferometer **38** whereby the laser beam **36a** is either intensified through constructive interference or weakened through destructive interference. Because the Mach-Zender interferometer **38** operates in a matter of a few nanoseconds or even picoseconds the adequately intense beam of light directed at a selected microsphere can occur or be terminated for a brief period of time, thereby allowing for rapid optical switching and routing. A computer **40** is used to control the Mach-Zender interferometer **38** and to select which microsphere to enable WGM resonance in. Any residual light transmission in a switched optical fiber may, as is commonly the case, be removed with an attenuator **42**.

[0126] Monitoring, equalizing, grooming and channel balancing within a given channel may be accomplished by adjusting the intensity of the laser beams **36a** or **36b** irradiating the microspheres to control the index of refraction of “*n*±*x*,” for the microsphere, wherein as “*x*” approaches zero, the efficiency of the transfer of the light within the channel approaches the microsphere’s maximum obtainable coupling efficiency

[0127] Illustrated in **FIG. 3A** is an optical router, generally designated **50**, which contains a series of optical switches **51** each operating by the movement of microspheres **S1**, **S2** or **S3** in and out of close proximity with an unclad or thinly clad region **52** of a first and second optical fiber **F1** & **F2** (**FIGS. 3B and 3C**). Each microsphere has a steady state index of refraction “*n*” substantially similar to the index of refraction of the unclad or thinly clad region of the optical fibers **F1** & **F2** that the optical router **50** switches optical signals between.

[0128] Generally, the size of each microsphere **S1-S3** corresponds to the wavelength of light (channel) the microsphere can effectively resonate for in WGM. An optical router **50** with three optical switches **51**, each with a microsphere of a different size, can route up to three channels. Only three microspheres are shown for clarity, however, it should be understood by those skilled in the art that a greater or lesser number of microspheres of pre-selected sizes can be selected to form the router without departing from the scope of the invention. The movement of the microspheres **S1**, **S2** or **S3** is controlled by containing each microsphere **S1**, **S2** or **S3** within an array of independently movable optical traps **T1**, **T2** and **T3**.

[0129] Optical traps are produced by the gradient forces arising from passing beamlets of light through a high numerical aperture focusing lens **52** and converging each

beamlet of light. The formation of an array of independently movable optical traps capable of manipulating small particles, such as microspheres is known in the art and therefore only an overview description of such formation is provided.

[0130] To route a signal from a channel in the first optical fiber F1 to a channel in the second optical fiber F2 the selected optical switch 51 is activated. To activate an optical switch 51 the selected microsphere S1 initially held remote from the unclad or thinly clad regions 53 of the first and second optical fibers F1 & F2 (FIG. 3B) is moved, with an optical trap, into close proximity (FIG. 3C) to the unclad or thinly clad regions S2 of the first optical fiber and second optical fiber F1 & F2.

[0131] Shown in FIG. 4 is an overview of a system to generate and control the optical traps used to contain the dielectric microspheres S1-S3. The optical traps T1-T3 (FIG. 3A) are formed by passing a collimated light, preferably a laser beam 61, produced by a laser 62 at area 'a' of a beam altering optical element 63. The beam altering optical element diffracts the laser beam 61 into a plurality of beamlets 64 each beamlet passing through area "b" at the back aperture 65 of the focusing lens 52 and containing a microsphere S1-S3.

[0132] Any suitable laser can be used as the source of the laser beam 62. Useful lasers include solid state lasers, diode pumped laser, gas lasers, dye lasers, alexanderite lasers, free electron lasers, VCSEL lasers, diode lasers, Ti-Sapphire lasers, doped YAG lasers, doped YLF lasers, diode pumped YAG lasers and, flash lamp-pumped YAG lasers. Diode-pumped Nd:YAG lasers operating between 10 mW and 5 W are preferred.

[0133] When the laser beam 61 is directed at the beam altering optical element 63, the beam altering optical element produces the plurality of beamlets 64 by altering phase profile of the laser beam 61. Depending on the number and type of optical traps desired, the alteration may include diffraction, wavefront shaping, phase shifting, steering, diverging and converging.

[0134] Suitable beam altering optical elements are characterized as transmissive or reflective depending on how they direct the focused beam of light or energy. Transmissive diffractive optical elements affect the beam of light or energy as it passes therethrough, while reflective diffractive optical elements affect the beam of light or energy as it is reflected.

[0135] A beam altering optical element can also be categorized as being static or dynamic. Examples of suitable static beam altering optical elements include those with one or more fixed surface regions, such as gratings, holograms, stencils, light shaping holographic filters, polychromatic holograms, lenses, mirrors, prisms, waveplates and the like.

[0136] Examples of suitable dynamic beam altering optical elements having a time dependent aspect to their function include computer generated diffractive patterns, phase shifting materials, liquid crystal phase shifting arrays, micro-mirror arrays, piston mode micro-mirror arrays, spatial light modulators, electro-optic deflectors, acousto-optic modulators, deformable mirrors, reflective MEMS arrays and the like. With a dynamic beam altering optical element, the media which comprises the beam altering optical element can be altered, to change the phase pattern imparted to

the laser beam 61 which results in a corresponding change in the phase profile of the laser beam 61, such as diffraction, or convergence.

[0137] The beam altering optical element is also useful to impart a particular topological mode to the laser beam 61. Accordingly, one beamlet may be in a Gauss-Laguerre mode while another beamlet in a Gaussian mode.]

[0138] Preferred dynamic optical elements include phase-only spatial light modulators such as the "PAL-SLM series X7665", manufactured by Hamamatsu, of Japan or the "SLM 512SA7," manufactured by Boulder Nonlinear Systems of Lafayette Colo. These beam altering optical elements are computer 65 controlled to generate the optical traps T1-T3.

[0139] Because the steady state index of refraction "n" of each microsphere S1-S3 corresponds to the index of refraction of the optical fibers F1 & F2 optical switching will occur when the selected microsphere S1 is moved close enough to the unclad or thinly clad regions 52 of the optical fibers F1 & F2. At some distance from the optical fibers F1 & F2 the evanescent wave, associated with the signal of the selected channel, will cross the surface of the selected microsphere S1, via WGM resonance, and switch signal between optical fibers F1 & F2. When the switching is completed the optical trap is quickly withdrawn and the microsphere S1 ceases to switch signal.

[0140] By adjusting the distance the microsphere S1 from the unclad or thinly region 52 of the optical fibers F1 & F2 a controllable index of refraction of "n±x" for the microsphere may be obtained, wherein as "x" approaches zero the efficiency of the transfer of signal approaches the microsphere's maximum obtainable efficiency which may be useful for applications such as channel equalizing, grooming and power balancing.

[0141] In another invention relating to optical filters, FIG. 5 depicts an always "on" optical filter 100. The optical filter 100 is constructed of a dielectric microsphere "S" fixed proximate to an input waveguide 110 and an output waveguide 120, each of which supports signal propagation of a group of signals $\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2} \dots \lambda_{rs_n}$ and provides a corresponding evanescent wave along the waveguide. The dielectric microsphere S will filter a specific wavelength signal corresponding to the resonate signal "RS" (λ_{rs_2}) it resonates for in WGM. The RS for a specific size microsphere can be obtained from the second equation ($d_e/q=RS$).

[0142] Further, as shown in the Table of FIG. 27, by selecting a small diameter microsphere S, the optical filter 100 can be constructed whereby it will only resonate in WGM for a single signal within a telecommunications band at a pre-determined channel spacing. Microsphere diameters are preferably between about 29 and 2 microns, more preferably between about 19 and 2 microns and most preferably between about 9 and 2 microns.

[0143] The microsphere S affixed within a medium 1000 which has an index of refraction " n_{medium} " that is different from the index of refraction of the microsphere S " $n_{rs}^{(\text{microsphere})}$ ". The difference between the indexes of refraction should be adequate to establish an condition of total internal reflection at the resonate structure-medium interface 1500 formed between the medium and the microsphere S. For microspheres constructed of silica with an index of refrac-

tion of 1.52, the media should have an index of refraction of about below 1.52. Suitable media may include plastic, oil, or water.

[0144] Establishing the condition of total internal reflection, at the resonate structure-medium interface **1500**, is used to increase the Q of a small diameter microsphere by reducing the losses in Q due to Q^{-1}_{rad} (which are those losses in Q attributable to the smallness of the diameter of the microsphere).

[0145] The input and output waveguides **110** and **120** for the optical filter are constructed from an input and output optical fiber **F1** and **F2**, each of which has a core **130** through which signals travel which is surrounded by a layer of cladding **140**. The core **130** is normally constructed of a high index of refraction material such as silicon (Si index 3.5) and the cladding **140** of a low index of refraction material such as silicon oxide (SiO_2 index 1.5). Other high index of refraction materials, such as Ge, GaAs, InP, and GaAlAs, among others, form the core. The suitable materials are limited only to those which display a longitudinal signal propagation and may include waveguides constructed out of semi-conductor material, or photonic band gap material, or photonic crystal material.

[0146] Around the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces **150** the cladding is thinned or stripped forming a region of reduced cladding **160**. Further, each optical fiber **F1** and **F2** is illustrated with the core **130** reduced **170** down to a tapered core **180**. It is known that that a reduction in the core **130** into a tapered core **180**, with a smaller diameter or waist, can establish a condition wherein the evanescent wave the light signal forms while traveling along the optical fiber can have an extended evanescent tail into the free space surrounding the tapered core **180**. The signal amplitude of the evanescent wave available for coupling from the input optical fiber **F1** decreases generally exponentially from the distance from the optical fiber the microsphere is fixed to the input optical fiber **F1** from which it receive the evanescent tail.

[0147] Although tapered fibers are illustrated and preferred, tapering is not a limitation and non-tapered optical fibers or other waveguides may be substituted for the tapered optical fibers. In some cases, depending on the desired signal amplitude for the RS the amount of taper may be varied to support a evanescent wave corresponding to a specific RS amplitude.

[0148] Proximate placement of the microsphere **S** to the input waveguide **110** and secondary structure **120** places the microsphere **S** in a position to couple a light signal from the input waveguide **110** or to the output waveguide **120**. In practice the microsphere **S** will receive the evanescent wave of its RS, at a resonate structure-waveguide interface **150**, emanating from the input waveguide **110** and switch a portion of those RS at a resonate structure-waveguide interface **150** to the output waveguide **120**.

[0149] The microsphere **S** may also be coated with an index specific coating **2000** whereby the index of refraction of the index specific coating " $n_{rs}^{(coated\ microsphere)}$ " is the effective index of refraction of the microsphere. Suitable coatings include, but are not limited to germanium, silicon, and SiGe.

[0150] An optical filter **200** with an electronic control is shown in **FIG. 6**. The microsphere **S** is fixed proximate to

an input waveguide **110** (which supports a group of optical signals ($\lambda_{rs0}, \lambda_{rs1}, \lambda_{rs2}, \dots \lambda_{rsn}$) and an output waveguide **120**. The electronic control is formed by placing an electrode pair **E** & **E'** conductively linked to a controller (not shown) by conductive leads **210** on opposing surfaces of the microsphere. The electronic control provides an "on/off" function by one of two WGM controls.

[0151] The electronic control mechanism, for either the first or second WGM control, is the polarization of the microsphere **S**. Polarization of the microsphere **S** can be achieved by a linear electro optic effect. Passing an electrical power (a voltage or current) across an electrode pair **E** & **E'** on opposing surfaces of the microsphere and conductively linked to a controller (not shown) by conductive leads **210** may be used to produce such a linear electro optic effect. The linear electro optic effect will polarize the substrate of the microsphere by altering its dielectric constant " $\epsilon_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ ". The $\epsilon_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ has a "real" portion " ϵ_1 " and an imaginary portion " $i\epsilon_2$ ", and is the sum of both portions as shown in the third equation: $\epsilon_{rs} = (\epsilon_1 + i\epsilon_2)$.

[0152] When $i\epsilon_2$ remains a constant, the index of refraction of the microsphere (resonate structure) $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ is known to be proportional to the square root of the "real" portion of the dielectric constant of the microsphere $\sqrt{\epsilon_1}$. Accordingly, $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ can be altered through the controlled change of ϵ_1 by the linear electro optic effect.

[0153] The first WGM control can switch "on/off" the optical filter based on adjustment of the index of refraction of the microsphere " $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ " to establish conditions which either support or do not support WGM resonance by the microsphere "**S**". The polarization adjusts n_{rs} and from the first equation it is known that when "**d**" remains fixed and the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ changes, the d_e will change. Further, from the second equation it is known that the RS is a function of d_e/q , and if d_e changes, a corresponding change in the RS will occur. Therefore, adjusting the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ is used to establish conditions to either select an $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ which supports or does not support WGM resonance for the specific RS.

[0154] A default "on" optical filter of the first WGM control, occurs when the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ supports WGM for the specific wavelength RS for which switching is desired. In such a default "on" optical filter, the "off" function is the adjustment of the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ to no longer support WGM resonance for the specific RS. It is also possible to use this adjustment in the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ to tune a microsphere and select from a range of different wavelength RS for switching.

[0155] Conversely, a default "off" optical filter of the first WGM control occurs when the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ does not support WGM resonance for a specific RS. In such a default "off" optical filter, WGM resonance for the specific RS is achieved by adjusting the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ to tune the microsphere to support WGM for a specific wavelength RS.

[0156] In either a default "on" or a default "off" optical filter, the adjustment to the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ is through polarization or through an interruption in polarization.

[0157] The "on/off" function of the second WGM control derives from either disrupting or establishing coupling conditions between the microsphere **S** and the input optical fiber **110** and/or the output waveguide **120** at one or more regions,

each forming a resonate structure-waveguide interfaces **150**. Polarization of the microsphere **S** is again used to adjust the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$. However, the adjustment of n_{rs} is relative to the index of refraction of a medium **1000** " n_{medium} " surrounding the microsphere **S**.

[0158] When the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ substantially equals n_{medium} at a resonate structure-waveguide interface **150**, the microsphere **S** at that interface is effectively medium and transparent to all signals. When the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ does not substantially equal the n_{medium} the microsphere **S** is distinct from the medium **1000** and switching via WGM resonance from the input waveguide **110** to the output waveguide **120** can occur when **RS** is provided.

[0159] The microsphere **S** within the electronically controlled optical filter **200** may be coated with an optically active material **3000** such as molecules of liquid crystal, organic photorefractive polymers, GaAs, Nitrobenzene and $LiNbO_3$. . . in which case the voltage or current passed between the electrode pair **210** and across the microsphere **S** is used to polarize the optically active coating material **3000** and change the dielectric constant $\epsilon_1^{(coated\ microsphere)}$ of the coated microsphere, which adjusts the index of the coated microsphere " $n_{rs}^{(coated\ microsphere)}$ ". Accordingly, application of the first or second WGM controls can be applied through adjustment of the $n_{rs}^{(coated\ microsphere)}$. The optically active coating may also be the index specific coating **2000**.

[0160] An optically controlled filter **300** is shown in **FIG. 7**. As described in reference to **FIG. 5**, a microsphere "**S**" which resonates in WGM for a group of **RS** ($\lambda_{rs0}, \lambda_{rs1}, \lambda_{rs2}$) is fixed proximate to the input waveguide **110** and the output waveguide **120**. In this embodiment polarization of the microsphere **S** is achieved by an optical effect which polarizes the microsphere **S** by applying an intense beam of light to the microsphere **S**.

[0161] The optical control is formed by directing an intense beam of light, which can be pulsed on or off in "optical real time", from a laser beam **5000** through an illuminating fiber **320** into a Mach-Zender interferometer **340** which produces a modified laser beam **5010** exiting the Mach-Zender interferometer **340**. The modified laser beam **5010** is either intensified by the Mach-Zender interferometer **340**, through constructive interference or weakened through destructive interference. The Mach-Zender interferometer **340** operates in the picoseconds range and the modified laser beam **5010** directed at the microsphere **S** can occur or terminate in a similar time interval. A controller such as a computer **360** is used to control the Mach-Zender interferometer **340**.

[0162] The modified laser beam **5010** polarizes the microsphere **S** by effecting the "real" portion " ϵ_1 " of its dielectric constant " $\epsilon^{(microsphere)}$ ". Accordingly, when the "imaginary" portion " $i\epsilon_2$ " of $\epsilon^{(microsphere)}$ remains constant, the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$, which is proportional to $\sqrt{\epsilon_1}$ can be adjusted through a controlled change of ϵ_1 reduced by an optical effect.

[0163] As discussed in detail with respect to the electronically controlled optical filter shown in **FIG. 6**, the alteration of the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ provides for the WGM controls which can be used to switch "on/off" the optical filter **300**.

[0164] The microsphere **S** within the optical filter **300** may also be coated with an optically active material **3000** in

which case the optical effect can be used to apply a WGM control to adjust the $n_{rs}^{(coated\ microsphere)}$ as described in reference to **FIG. 6**.

[0165] Shown in **FIG. 8** is a signal loss optical filter wherein a controlled signal loss is used to disrupt the WGM resonance of the microsphere **S**. To provide for signal loss a triggerable signal absorbing material such as photochromic bithienylethene **420** is placed within the substrate of the microsphere.

[0166] The trigger shown in this embodiment is a modified laser beam **5010** exiting a Mach-Zender interferometer **340** which triggers the signal absorbing material to absorb sufficient light signal to disrupt WGM resonance.

[0167] Those skilled in the art will recognize that photochromic bithienylethene is but one member of a broader group of photochromic materials which may be combined into the substrate of the microsphere **S** to act as the light absorbing material. Moreover, other materials which have light absorbing properties and can be triggered by a specific quality or quantity of light outside the optical band may be used as the light absorbing material. Other material which can be selectively activated with the appropriate trigger and may include a beam of light, or electrical energy applied to the microsphere, which in turn will pump the signal absorbing material to a higher energy state to provide for its signal absorbing activity include, but are not limited to, semiconductor nanoclusters, electrochromic nanocrystals, quantum dots, doped semi-conductor nanoclusters, PDLC, and semi conductors, and dyes.

[0168] A system comprised of a group of optical filters which optically cross connect waveguides and demultiplex (DEMUX) optical signals is shown in **FIG. 9**. The DEMUX system **500** is constructed of " n " groups of wavelength specific optical filters. Each of the " n " groups of filters contains " m " redundant optical filters **520**, **520'** and **520''**, **540**, **540'** and **540''** and **560**, **560'** and **560''**. Each of the " m " redundant filters **520-560''** is fixed proximate to the input waveguide **W1** through which optical signals of a different wavelength ($\lambda_{rs0}, \lambda_{rs1}, \lambda_{rs2}, \lambda_{rs3} \dots \lambda_{rsn}$) are supplied. One of the " m " redundant filters from each of the " n " groups is also fixed proximate to one of " m " output waveguides **W2**, **W2'** and **W2''**, whereby the optical signals can be multiplexed (MUX) into the output waveguides **W2**, **W2'** and **W2''**. The entire DEMUX system is placed in a medium **1000** with a known index of refraction. The optical filters **520-560''** may be always "on" and simply cross connect between waveguides.

[0169] At least some of the optical filters **520-560''** in the DEMUX system **500** may be switched "on/off". Switching "on/off" may be through polarization applied via an electronic or optical control by adjusting the index of refraction of a microsphere $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ or by a signal loss control. In the case of a signal loss control a trigger, such as an intense beam of light **600** is applied to a microsphere **S** which contains a triggerable signal absorbing material within its substrate.

[0170] Illustrated in **FIG. 10** is an overview of a system and method, generally designated **700** to construct an optical switch, or a group of optical filters such as those described in reference to **FIG. 9**, by using one or more optical traps to place and/or hold the WGM microspheres.

[0171] To fabricate an optical filter, movable optical traps **10000** & **10020** are generated within an assembly vessel **710**. The assembly vessel should be constructed of a material which is at least partially transparent, and which allows the light used to form optical traps to pass through in the desired location.

[0172] The optical traps **10000** & **10020** are used to manipulate small microspheres **S1** & **S2** and position them to construct an optical filter. Optical traps **10000** & **10020** can be formed by passing a collimated light, preferably a laser beam **5000**, to area "A" on a phase patterning optical element **720** which generates beamlets **730** & **740**. Each beamlet **730** & **740** created by the phase patterning optical element **720** then passes through transfer optics **L1** & **L2** onward to a beam splitter **750**.

[0173] The beam splitter **750** provides two streams of light **760** & **770** oriented in different directions. The first light streams **760** originate from the phase patterning optical element **720** as beamlets **730** & **740** which are redirected by the beam splitter through area "B" at the back aperture **780** of a focusing lens **790** thereby overlapping the beamlets **730** & **740** at the back aperture **780** of the focusing lens. In those embodiments in which the crown section of the beamlets **730** & **740** is less intense at the periphery and more intense at regions inward from the periphery, overfilling the back aperture **780** by less than about 15 percent is useful to form optical traps with greater intensity at the periphery of the optical traps than without overfilling the back aperture **780**.

[0174] The beamlets **730** & **740** they pass through the focusing lens **790** to form the optical traps **10000** & **10020** by producing the gradient conditions necessary to contain and manipulate the microspheres **S1** & **S2** in three-dimensions. Only two sets of microspheres, beamlets, and optical traps are shown for clarity, but it should be understood that a greater or lesser number can be provided depending on the nature, scope, and other parameters of the assay and the capabilities of the system generating the optical traps. Altering the phase patterning optical element alters the phase profile of the beam, which can alter the position of the optical traps.

[0175] Any suitable laser can be used as the source of the laser beam **5000**. Useful lasers include solid state lasers, diode pumped lasers, gas lasers, dye lasers, alexanderite lasers, free electron lasers, VCSEL lasers, diode lasers, Ti-Sapphire lasers, doped YAG lasers, doped YLF lasers, diode pumped YAG lasers, and flash lamp-pumped YAG lasers. Diode-pumped Nd:YAG lasers operating between 10 mW and 5 W are preferred.

[0176] When the laser beam **5000** reflects off the phase patterning optical element **720**, the phase patterning optical element produces the beamlets **730** & **740**, each having a phase profile. Depending on the number and type of optical traps desired, the phase profile may be altered, the alteration may include diffraction, wavefront shaping, phase shifting, steering, diverging and converging. Based upon the phase profile chosen, the phase patterning optical element can be used to generate optical traps in the form of optical tweezers, optical vortices, optical bottles, optical rotators, light cages, and combinations of two or more of these forms.

[0177] Suitable phase patterning optical elements are characterized as transmissive or reflective depending on how

they direct the focused beam of light or other source of energy. Transmissive diffractive optical elements transmit the beam of light or other source of energy, while reflective diffractive optical elements reflect the beam.

[0178] The phase patterning optical element can also be categorized as having a static or a dynamic surface. Examples of suitable static phase patterning optical elements include those with one or more fixed surface regions, such as gratings, including diffraction gratings, reflective gratings, and transmissive gratings, holograms, including polychromatic holograms, stencils, light shaping holographic filters, polychromatic holograms, lenses, mirrors, prisms, waveplates and the like.

[0179] Examples of suitable dynamic phase patterning optical elements having a time dependent aspect to their function include computer generated diffractive patterns, phase shifting materials, liquid crystal phase shifting arrays, micro-mirror arrays, including piston mode micro-mirror arrays, spatial light modulators, electro-optic deflectors, acousto-optic modulators, deformable mirrors, reflective MEMS arrays and the like. With a dynamic phase patterning optical element, the medium which comprises the phase patterning optical element can be altered, to impart a patterned phase shift to the focused beam of light which results in a corresponding change in the phase profile of the focused beam of light, such as diffraction or convergence. Additionally, the medium which comprises the phase patterning optical element can be altered to produce a change in the location of the optical traps. It is an advantage of dynamic phase patterning optical elements, that the medium can be altered to independently move each optical trap.

[0180] Preferred dynamic optical elements include phase-only spatial light modulators such as the "PAL-SLM series X7665", manufactured by Hamamatsu, of Japan or the "SLM 512SA7," and "SLM 512SA15" both manufactured by Boulder Nonlinear Systems of Lafayette Colo. These phase patterning optical elements are computer controlled, by encoding a hologram within the medium, to generate the beamlets **10000** & **10020**.

[0181] The phase patterning optical element is also useful to impart a particular topological mode to the laser light. Accordingly, one beamlet may be formed into a Gauss-Laguerre mode while another beamlet may be formed in a gaussian mode.

[0182] Returning to the beam splitter, the beam splitter **750** also provides a second light stream **770** originating from an imaging illumination source **800**. The second light stream **770** passes through the working region **710** and the beam splitter **750** and forms an optical data stream **82** which provides information on the position of the microspheres **S1** & **S2** in the working region **710**. The optical data stream can be converted to a video signal, monitored, or analyzed by visual inspection of an operator, spectroscopically, and/or video monitoring. The optical data stream **820** may also be processed **840** by a photodetector to monitor intensity, or any suitable device to convert the optical data stream to a digital data stream adapted for use by a computer.

[0183] To contain, position and hold a microsphere in a selected location, an operator and/or the computer can adjust the phase patterning optical element **720** to direct the movement of the optical traps **10000** & **10020** to first acquire

the selected microsphere and contain it within an optical trap. An optical trap with a contained microsphere may then be reconfigured as to the position of the microsphere. The optical data stream **820** can be used to identify and/or monitor the position of one or more of the trapped. Based on the positional and identity information the holograph encoded in the medium of the phase patterning optical element **720** can be altered. Such alteration of the holograph can be used to change the type of optical trap as well as the position of the optical trap and a microsphere contained thereby.

[0184] In another invention related to optical filters, **FIGS. 11A and 11B** depict an optically triggered optical switch. The optical switch **4000** is constructed of a dielectric microsphere "S", less than about 200 microns in diameter, fixed at a region proximate to an input waveguide **1100** which supports signal propagation of a group of signals $\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2} \dots \lambda_{rs_n}$ each of which provides a corresponding evanescent wave along the waveguide **1100**, and a secondary structure **1200**. The secondary structure **1200** should be a structure such as another waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide, a semi-conductor waveguide, a photonic crystal waveguide, a WGM microsphere or other resonate structure which supports signal propagation. The dielectric microsphere S resonates in WGM for a group of resonate signals "RS" ($\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2}$) which can be obtained from the second equation ($d_e/q=RS$).

[0185] Proximate placement of the microsphere S to the input waveguide **1100** and secondary structure **1200** places the microsphere S in a position to couple a light signal from the input waveguide **1100** or to the secondary structure **1200**. In practice the microsphere S will receive the evanescent wave of its RS (λ_{rs_0} , and λ_{rs_2}), at a resonate structure-waveguide interface **1400**, emanating from the input waveguide **1100** and switch the RS (λ_{rs_0} , and λ_{rs_2}) at a resonate structure-waveguide interface **1400** to the secondary structure **1200**.

[0186] Within the substrate forming the microsphere a triggerable signal absorbing material **1500** (such as photochromic bithienylethene) is placed. Signal loss can be achieved by altering the imaginary portion of the dielectric constant ($i\epsilon_2$) through the action of the signal absorbing material **1500** triggered by directing an intense beam of light, shown in **FIG. 11B** at the resonate structure to trigger the action off the signal absorbing material **1500**. A laser beam **5000** can be used to provide the intense beam of light. Advantages of the laser beam are that it can be pulsed on or off in "optical real time" (in the order of nanosecond or picoseconds), providing "on/off" switching in the order of nanosecond or picoseconds, by the signal loss caused by triggering the signal absorbing material **1500** to absorb sufficient light signal to disrupt WGM resonance.

[0187] The intense beam of light can be produced by a laser beam **5000** passing through an illuminating fiber **5005** into a Mach-Zender interferometer **5200** which produces a modified laser beam **5010** exiting the Mach-Zender interferometer **5200**. The modified laser beam **5010** is either intensified by the Mach-Zender interferometer **5200**, through constructive interference or weakened through destructive interference. The Mach-Zender interferometer **5200** operates in the picoseconds range and the modified laser beam **5010** directed at the microsphere S can occur or

terminate in a similar time interval. A controller such as a computer **5400** is used to control the Mach-Zender interferometer **5200**.

[0188] Those skilled in the art will recognize that photochromic bithienylethene is but one member of a broader group of photochromic materials which may be combined into the substrate of the microsphere S to act as the light absorbing material. Moreover, other materials which have light signal absorbing properties and can be triggered by a specific quality or quantity of light outside the optical band may be used as the light absorbing material. Other material which can be selectively activated with the appropriate trigger which may include a beam of light, or electrical energy applied to the microsphere which in turn will pump the signal absorbing material to a higher energy state to provide for its signal absorbing activity include, but are not limited to, semi conductor nanoclusters, electrochromic nanocrystals, semi conductors, quantum dots, doped semiconductor nanoclusters, PDLC, dihydroindolizines, diarylimylenes, ScGe, bis-Mienylperfluorocyclopentenes, spiropyrans, fulgides, and dyes.

[0189] Although a tapered optical fiber is the preferred waveguide **1100**, it is not a limitation and non-tapered optical fibers or other waveguides may be substituted for the tapered optical fibers.

[0190] The waveguide **1100** is constructed from an input optical fiber which has a core through which signals travel which is surrounded by a layer of cladding. The cladding has an index of refraction sufficiently distinct from the index of refraction of the core to establish a condition of total internal reflection at the core-cladding interface. The core is normally constructed of a high index of refraction material such as silicon (Si index 3.5) and the cladding of a low index of refraction material such as silicon oxide (SiO_2 index 1.5). Other high index of refraction materials such as Ge, GaAs, InP, GaAlAs, among others form the core. The suitable materials are limited only to those which display a longitudinal signal propagation and may include waveguides constructed out of semi-conductor material, or photonic band gap materials.

[0191] Around the resonate structure-waveguide interface **1400** with the waveguide the cladding is thinned or stripped forming a region of reduced cladding **1600**. It is known that a reduction in the core into a tapered core, with a smaller diameter or waist, can establish a condition wherein the evanescent wave the light signal forms while traveling along the optical fiber can have an extended evanescent tail into the free space surrounding the tapered core.

[0192] Although tapered fibers are preferred, tapering is not a limitation and non-tapered optical fibers or other waveguides, including but not limited to semi-conductor waveguides formed from of semi-conductor material and constructed by lithographic methods used in the construction of semi-conductor waveguides, may be substituted for the tapered optical fibers. In some cases, depending on the desired signal amplitude for the RS which continues down the input optical fiber downstream from the optical filter **1600** the amount of taper may be varied to control downstream RS amplitude.

[0193] The group of filters shown in **FIG. 12** can be used to demultiplex (DEMUX) different wavelength signals

within an optical transmission band. The demultiplexing system **200** shown in **FIG. 12** is constructed of “n” groups each containing “m” filters **220, 220', 220'', 240, 240', 240''** and **260, 260' and 260''**. Each group of “m” filters is redundant in that it filters for the same wavelength RS. The filters are each fixed proximate to an input waveguide **W1**, through which optical signals in different channels, each with a different wavelength ($\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2}, \lambda_{rs_3} \dots \lambda_{rs_n}$) can propagate. The optical signals are then directed by the filters (**220-260''**) to a group of output waveguides **W2, W2' and W2''** where the optical signals can be multiplexed (MUX) into the output waveguides **W2, W2' and W2''**. The preferred waveguide construction is to use optical fibers with tapered regions of reduced cladding as described in reference to **FIG. 11A** at resonate structure waveguide interfaces where coupling occurs. The microspheres within each filter contain a triggerable light absorbing material in their substrate. To prevent optical switching from a microsphere to an output waveguide **W2, W2' or W2''** which is fixed proximate to an intense beam of light, such as a modified laser beam **5010**, it is applied as a trigger to the microsphere **S** for which switching is not desired.

[0194] The within system to DEMUX and/or MUX is but one example of a combination of filters used to optically cross connect signals between waveguides. There may be as few as one optical filter in each of the “m” groups. Additional switches may be added. Further, the optical filters of the present invention, which disrupt WGM resonance by signal loss, may be configured in different and various positions without departing from the invention.

[0195] Illustrated in **FIG. 13** is an overview of a system and method, generally designated **3300** to construct an optical switch, or a group of optical filters such as those described in reference to **FIG. 12**, by using one or more optical traps to place and/or hold the WGM microspheres.

[0196] To fabricate an optical filter, movable optical traps **10000 & 10020** are generated within an assembly vessel **3310**. The assembly vessel should be constructed of a material which is at least partially transparent, and which allows the light used to form optical traps to pass through in the desired location.

[0197] The optical traps **10000 & 10020** are used to manipulate small microspheres **S1 & S2** and position them to construct an optical filter. Optical traps **10000 & 10020** can be formed by passing a collimated light, preferably a laser beam **5000**, to area “A” on a phase patterning optical element **3320** which generates beamlets **3330 & 3340**. Each beamlet **3330 & 3340** created by the phase patterning optical element **3320** then passes through transfer optics **L1 & L2** onward to a beam splitter **3350**.

[0198] The beam splitter **3350** provides two streams of light **3360 & 3370** oriented in different directions. The first light streams **3360** originates from the phase patterning optical element **3320** as beamlets **3330 & 3340** which are redirected by the beam splitter **3350** through area “B” at the back aperture **3380** of a focusing lens **3390** thereby overlapping the beamlets **3340 & 3350** at the back aperture **3380** of the focusing lens. In those embodiments in which the non section of the beamlets **3330 & 3340** is less intense at the periphery and more intense at regions inward from the periphery, overfilling the back aperture **3380** by less than about 15 percent is useful to form optical traps with greater

intensity at the periphery of each optical trap than without overfilling the back aperture **3380**.

[0199] The beamlets **3330 & 3340** are converged as they pass through the focusing lens **3390** to form the optical traps **10000 & 10020** by producing the gradient conditions necessary to contain and manipulate the microspheres **S1 & S2** in three dimensions. Only two sets of microspheres, beamlets, and optical traps are shown for clarity, but it should be understood that a greater or lesser number can be provided depending on the nature, scope, and other parameters of the assay and the capabilities of the system generating the optical traps. Altering the phase patterning optical element alters the phase profile of the beam, which can alter the position of the optical traps.

[0200] Any suitable laser can be used as the source of the laser beam **5000**. Useful lasers include solid state lasers, diode pumped lasers, gas lasers, dye lasers, alexanderite lasers, free electron lasers, VCSEL lasers, diode lasers, Ti-Sapphire lasers, doped YAG lasers, doped YLF lasers, diode pumped YAG lasers, and flash lamp-pumped YAG lasers. Diode-pumped Nd:YAG lasers operating between 10 mW and 5 W are preferred.

[0201] When the laser beam **5000** reflects off the phase patterning optical element **3320**, the phase patterning optical element produces the beamlets **3330 & 3340**, each having a phase profile. Depending on the number and type of optical traps desired, the phase profile may be altered, the alteration may include diffraction, wavefront shaping, phase shifting, steering, diverging and converging. Based upon the phase profile chosen, the phase patterning optical element can be used to generate optical traps in the form of optical tweezers, optical vortices, optical bottles, optical rotators, light cages, and combinations of two or more of these forms.

[0202] Suitable phase patterning optical elements are characterized as transmissive or reflective depending on how they direct the focused beam of light or other source of energy. Transmissive diffractive optical elements transmit the beam of light or other source of energy, while reflective diffractive optical elements reflect the beam.

[0203] The phase patterning optical element can also be categorized as having a static or a dynamic surface. Examples of suitable static phase patterning optical elements include those with one or more fixed surface regions, such as gratings, including diffraction gratings, reflective gratings, and transmissive gratings, holograms, including polychromatic holograms, stencils, light shaping holographic filters, polychromatic holograms, lenses, mirrors, prisms, waveplates and the like.

[0204] Examples of suitable dynamic phase patterning optical elements having a time dependent aspect to their function include computer generated diffractive patterns, phase shifting materials, liquid crystal phase shifting arrays, micro-mirror arrays, including piston mode micro-mirror arrays, spatial light modulators, electro-optic deflectors, acousto-optic modulators, deformable mirrors, reflective MEMS arrays and the like. With a dynamic phase patterning optical element, the medium which comprises the phase patterning optical element can be altered, to impart a patterned phase shift to the focused beam of light which results in a corresponding change in the phase profile of the focused beam of light, such as diffraction or convergence. Addition-

ally, the medium which comprises the phase patterning optical element can be altered to produce a change in the location of the optical traps. It is an advantage of dynamic phase patterning optical elements, that the medium can be altered to independently move each optical trap.

[0205] Preferred dynamic optical elements include phase-only spatial light modulators such as the “PAL-SLM series X7665”, manufactured by Hamamatsu, of Japan or the “SLM 512SA7,” and “SLM 512SA15” manufactured by Boulder Nonlinear Systems of Lafayette Colo. These phase patterning optical elements are computer controlled, by encoding a hologram within the medium, to generate the beamlets **10000** & **10020**.

[0206] The phase patterning optical element is also useful to impart a particular topological mode to the laser light. Accordingly, one beamlet may be formed into a Gauss-Laguerre mode while another beamlet may be formed in a gaussian mode.

[0207] Returning to the beam splitter, the beam splitter **3350** also provides a second light stream **3370** originating from an imaging illumination source **3340**. The second light stream **3370** passes through the working region **3310** and beam splitter **3350** and forms an optical data stream **4200** which provides information on the position of the microspheres **S1** & **S2** in the working region **3310**. The optical data stream can be converted to a video signal, monitored, or analyzed by visual inspection of an operator, spectroscopically, and/or video monitoring. The optical data stream **4200** may also be processed **4400** by a photodetector to monitor intensity, or any suitable device to convert the optical data stream to a digital data stream adapted for use by a computer.

[0208] To contain, position and hold a microsphere in a selected location, an operator and/or the computer can adjust the phase patterning optical element **3320** to direct the movement of the optical traps **10000** & **10020** to first acquire the selected microsphere and contain it within an optical trap. An optical trap with a contained microsphere may then be reconfigured as to the position of the microsphere. The optical data stream **4200** can be used to identify and/or monitor the position of one or more of the trapped. Based on the positional and identity information the holograph encoded in the medium of the phase patterning optical element **3320** can be altered. Such alteration of the holograph can be used to change the type of optical trap as well as the position of the optical trap and a microsphere contained thereby.

[0209] In another invention with respect to optical filters, an always “on” optical filter **6000** is shown in **FIG. 14**. A pair of subfilters, the first of which is the gate keeper **1150** and the second of which is the isolator **1250**, are connected and fixed between an input waveguide **W1** and an output waveguide **W2**.

[0210] The gate keeper subfilter contains the isolator dielectric microsphere “**S1**” and the isolator subfilter contains the gate keeper microsphere “**S2**”. Each microsphere **S1** and **S2** is fixed at a region proximate to either the input or output waveguide.

[0211] Each dielectric microsphere resonates in WGM for a group of resonate signals “**RS**” ($\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2}$) which can be obtained from the second equation ($d_e/q=RS$). The input

and output waveguides **W1** and **W2** for the optical filter of this embodiment are each constructed from an input optical fiber “**F1**” and output optical fiber “**F2**”. Each optical fiber **F1** and **F2** has a core **1350** through which signals travel which is surrounded by a layer of cladding **1450**. The cladding **1450** has an index of refraction sufficiently distinct from the index of refraction of the core **1350** to establish a condition of total internal reflection at the core-cladding interface. The core **1350** is normally constructed of a high index of refraction material such as silicon (Si index 3.5) and the cladding **1450** of a low index of refraction material such as silicon oxide (SiO_2 index 1.5). Other high index of refraction materials such as Ge, GaAs, InP, GaAlAs, among others form the core. The suitable materials are limited only to those which display a longitudinal signal propagation and may include waveguides constructed out of semi-conductor material, or photonic band gap materials.

[0212] A resonate structure-waveguide interface is formed **1550** an area of thinned or stripped cladding of the optical fiber which forms a region of reduced cladding **1650** where a microsphere “**S1**” or “**S2**” is fixed proximate to an optical fiber. Each microsphere **S1** and **S2** resonates in WGM for a group of resonate signals “**RS**” ($\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2}$) which can be obtained from the second equation ($d_e/q=RS$). Proximate placement of the gatekeeper microspheres **S1** to the input optical fiber **F1** and the isolator microsphere **S2** places the gatekeeper microsphere **S1** in a position to couple a light signal from the input optical fiber **F1** to the isolator microsphere **S2**.

[0213] In this embodiment the input and output optical fibers **F1** and **F2** are shown tapered. The taper is achieved when the core **1350** of an optical fiber is reduced **1750** down to a tapered core **1850**. It is known that that a reduction of the core **1350** into a tapered core **1850**, with a smaller diameter or waist, can establish a condition wherein the evanescent wave the light signal forms while traveling along the optical fiber can have an extended evanescent tail into the free space surrounding the tapered core **1850**. The signal amplitude of the evanescent wave available for coupling from the input optical fiber **F1** decreases generally exponentially from the distance from the optical fiber the microsphere is fixed to the input optical fiber **F1** from which it receives the evanescent tail.

[0214] Although tapered optical fibers are illustrated and preferred, tapering of the fiber is not a limitation and non-tapered optical fibers or other waveguides may be substituted for the tapered optical fibers. In some cases, depending on the desired signal amplitude for the **RS** which continues down the input optical fiber **F1** downstream from the optical filter **6000** the amount of taper may be varied to support a specific downstream **RS** amplitude.

[0215] Each optical fiber **F1** and **F2** supports signal propagation of a group of signals $\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2} \dots \lambda_{rs_n}$ which provide the corresponding evanescent wave (and tail of each evanescent wave) extending into the space along the region of reduced cladding **1650**.

[0216] In the optical filter **6000** the signal passes from the gate keeper subfilter **1150** directly to the isolator subfilter **1250**. Hence the gate keeper subfilter **1150** and the isolator subfilter **1250**, which are fixed at a region proximate to each other, are directly coupled at a direct subfilter interface **1950** at that proximate region. The microsphere **S1** within the gate

keeper subfilter **1150** will resonate in WGM for a group of RS ($\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2}$) while the microsphere **S2** within the isolator subfilter **1250** will resonate in WGM for a group of RS ($\lambda_{rs_2}, \lambda_{rs_7}, \lambda_{rs_9}$). Accordingly, because the gate keeper subfilter **1150** and the isolator subfilter **1250** have only a single RS in common (λ_{rs_2}), the throughput from input optical fiber **F1** to output optical fiber **F2** is only the single specific light signal (λ_{rs_2}). Additionally, the single RS (λ_{rs_2}) in common could be coupled to a secondary structure such as an additional subfilter or other structure which can receive and process an optical signal.

[0217] Such an optical filter **6000** may also act as an add switch. Specifically, in the embodiment shown in **FIG. 14** the common RS " λ_{rs_2} " is absent in the output optical fiber **F2** upstream from the isolator subfilter **1250**. Downstream from the isolator subfilter **1250** the absent RS (λ_{rs_2}), is within the output optical fiber **F2**.

[0218] The selected microspheres **S1** and **S2** should have a minimum "Q" (quality factor) which is being a measure of the full width at $\frac{1}{2}$ the maximum spectral frequency for a given signal, adequate to discern the separate channels as spaced in the telecommunications band supplying the signal to be switched. Examples of commonly referenced channel spacing structures found in a TDM, WDM and DWDM are as great as several hundred GHz or as narrow as 12.5 GHz. For 100 GHz spacing the minimum Q needed to maintain channel separation is about 2000. For 50 GHz spacing the minimum Q is about 4000 and for 12.5 GHz channel spacing the minimum Q is about 16,000.

[0219] To achieve a Q close to the limit of the material, resonate structure (in this example, a microsphere) losses due to Q_{rad}^{-1} and Q_{ss}^{-1} are minimized by using microspheres with a large diameter, preferably greater than 100 microns, to minimize those losses. Unfortunately, achievement of a high Q by virtue of using microspheres with an adequate diameter to minimize the losses due to Q_{rad}^{-1} and Q_{ss}^{-1} has a drawback—a large diameter microsphere will lead to the possibility that multiple RS can pass through the gate keeper **5150**. This drawback is, however, of no consequence when the isolator **5250** is selected to have but one RS in common with the gate keeper.

[0220] However, the 100 micron diameter is not a limitation. The actual diameter of a given microsphere should be in part, dependent on the channel spacing, and other variables of the system the filter is operating in. Silica Microsphere's in the 20-400 diameter size range are available from Duke Scientific Corporation of Palo Alto, Calif.

[0221] The "on/off" switched optical filter **6001** shown in **FIG. 15** is constructed of the optical filter **6000** of **FIG. 14** with at least the isolator **1250** subfilter being electronically controlled **2150**.

[0222] The electronic gate is formed by placing an electrode pair **E** & **E'** conductively linked to a controller (not shown) by conductive leads **2250** on opposing surfaces of the microsphere **S2** within the isolator subfilter **1250**. The electronic gate provides the "on/off" function by one of two WGM controls.

[0223] The electronic control mechanism, for either the first or second WGM control, is the polarization of the microsphere **S**. Polarization of the microsphere **S** can be achieved by a linear electro optic effect. Passing electrical

power (a voltage or current) across an electrode pair **E** & **E'** on opposing surfaces of the microsphere and conductively linked to a controller (not shown) by conductive leads **2250** may be used to produce such a linear electro optic effect. The linear electro optic effect will polarize the substrate of the microsphere by altering its dielectric constant " $\epsilon_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ ". The $\epsilon_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ has a "real" portion " ϵ_1 " and an imaginary portion " $i\epsilon_2$ ", and is the sum of both portions as shown in the third equation: $\epsilon_{rs} = (\epsilon_1 + i\epsilon_2)$.

[0224] When $i\epsilon_2$ remains a constant, the index of refraction of the microsphere (resonate structure) $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ is known to be generally proportional to the square root of the "real" portion of the dielectric constant for the microsphere $\sqrt{\epsilon_1}$. Accordingly, $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ can be altered through the controlled change of ϵ_1 by the linear electro optic effect. The ability to adjust the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ provides the two related, but different, WGM control cases.

[0225] The first WGM control can switch "on/off" the filter based on adjustment of the index of refraction of a microsphere " $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ " to establish conditions which either support or do not support WGM resonance by the microsphere "**S2**" for the specific RS which the filter selects. Although **FIG. 15** shows the first WGM control applied to the microsphere **S2** in the isolator subfilter **1250**, that illustration is not a limitation and the WGM control can be applied to the microsphere within either subfilter.

[0226] The mechanism of WGM resonance in a microsphere for a specific group of RS is describe by the first and second equations. From the first equation it is known that when "d" remains fixed and the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ changes, the d_e will change and from the second equation it is known that the RS are a function of d_e/q , and if d_e changes (in response to the change in $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$), a corresponding change in the RS will occur. Therefore, adjusting the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ can be used to establish conditions to either select an $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ which supports or does not support WGM resonance for a specific RS.

[0227] A default "on" filter of the first WGM control occurs when the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ supports WGM for a specific RS within the input waveguide **F1** for which switching is desired. In such a default "on" optical switch, the "off" function is the adjustment of the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ to no longer support WGM resonance for the specific RS. It is also possible to use this adjustment in the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ to tune a microsphere and select from a range of different specific RS for switching. In the simplest case, the adjustment of the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ tunes the default "on" optical switch away from WGM resonance for the desired RS. While such tuning can be used to select for other RS to switch, in this simplest case, to prevent unintended switching of other signals, the tuning is preferably to RS outside the telecommunications band.

[0228] Conversely, a default "off" filter of the first WGM control occurs when the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ does not support WGM resonance for a specific RS. In such a default "off" optical switch, WGM resonance for the specific RS may be achieved by adjusting the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ to tune the microsphere to support WGM for the specific RS.

[0229] In either a default "on" or a default "off" filter the adjustment to the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ may be through polarization or through an interruption in polarization.

[0230] The “on/off” switching through the second WGM control results from either disrupting or establishing coupling conditions at either the region of the resonate structure waveguide interface **1550** between the microsphere **S2** and the input optical fiber **F1** or at the region of the direct subfilter interface **1950**. Polarization of the microsphere **S2** is used to adjust the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ relative to the index of refraction of a medium **100** “ n_{medium} ” surrounding the microsphere **S2**. The medium should be non-conductive.

[0231] When the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ substantially equals the n_{medium} at a region of a resonate structure-waveguide interface **1550** or at the region of the direct subfilter interface **1950**, the microsphere **S2** is effectively medium and transparent to all signals. When the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ does not substantially equal the n_{medium} at the resonate structure-waveguide and direct subfilter interfaces **1550** and **1950**, the microsphere **S2** is distinct from the medium and coupling can occur.

[0232] The second WGM control may also be used to establish an “on” or “off” default state. A default “on” filter is achieved when the $n_{rs}^{(isolator)}$ is substantially dissimilar to the n_{medium} at the regions of the resonate structure-waveguide interface **15** and at the region of direct subfilter interface **1950**. The $n_{rs}^{(isolator)}$ can be adjusted through the application of an electro optic effect via an electrode pair **E** & **E'**, (described in reference to the first WGM control case), to switch off the subfilter by adjusting the $n_{rs}^{(isolator)}$ to become substantially equal to the n_{medium} at one of the regions of resonate structure-waveguide interfaces **1550** or at the region of direct subfilter interface **1950**.

[0233] Conversely a default “off” condition is achieved when the $n_{rs}^{(isolator)}$ substantially equals the n_{medium} at a region of resonate structure-waveguide interface **1550** or at a region of direct subfilter interface **1950**.

[0234] The microsphere **S2** within the filter **6001** may also be coated with an optically active material **2550** such as molecules of liquid crystal, organic photorefractive polymers, GaAs, Nitrobenzene and $LiNbO_3$, in which case the voltage or current passed between the electrode pair **2250** and across the microsphere **S2** is used to polarize the coating material **2550** and it is the change in the dielectric constant of the coating $\epsilon_1^{(coated\ microsphere)}$ which is the adjustment of the index of refraction “ $n_{rs}^{(coated\ microsphere)}$ ” for purposes of applying a WGM control.

[0235] The illustration of the electronic gate **2150** being applied to the isolator subfilter is not a limitation. A switched “on/off” filter may also be achieved by applying the electronic gate to either or both of the subfilters **1150** and **1250**.

[0236] Shown in **FIG. 16** is an embodiment of an “on/off” switched optical filter **6002** with an optical control. The optical gate is formed by directing an intense beam of light to polarize one of the microspheres **S1** and **S2** within one of the subfilters **1150** and **1250**.

[0237] An intense beam of light, which can be pulsed on or off in “optical real time”, can be a laser beam **5000** passed through an illuminating fiber **3150** into a Mach-Zender interferometer **3250** to produce a modified laser beam **5010** exiting the Mach-Zender interferometer **3250**. The modified laser beam **5010** is either intensified by the Mach-Zender interferometer **3250**, through constructive interference or weakened through destructive interference. The Mach-Zender interferometer **3250** operates in the picoseconds range

and the modified laser beam **5010** directed at the microsphere **S2** can occur or terminate in a similar time interval. A computer **3450** is used to control the Mach-Zender interferometer **3250**. The modified laser beam **5010** polarizes the microsphere **S2** by effecting the “real” portion “ ϵ_1 ” of its dielectric constant “ $\epsilon^{(microsphere)}$ ”. Accordingly, when the “imaginary” portion “ $i\epsilon_2$ ” of $\epsilon^{(microsphere)}$ remains constant, the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ which as previously noted is generally proportional to $\sqrt{\epsilon_1}$, can be adjusted through a controlled change of ϵ_1 by the optical effect.

[0238] As discussed in detail with respect to the electronically gated optical switch shown in **FIG. 15**, the alteration of the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ can be used to apply one of the two WGM controls. A WGM control can be applied to one or both subfilters **1150** and **1250** via an optical effect to switch “on/off” the filter **6002**. When applying the second WGM, the microsphere **S2** is placed in a medium **1000**.

[0239] The microsphere **S2** within the optically controlled filter **6002** may also be coated with an optically active material **2550** in which case the optical effect is used to adjust the $n_{rs}^{(coated\ microsphere)}$ as described in reference to **FIG. 15**. Adjusting the $n_{rs}^{(coated\ microsphere)}$ can therefore be used to apply a WGM control.

[0240] A signal loss filter **6003** which can be switched “on/off” with an intense beam of light, such as that produced by the Mach-Zender interferometer **3250** is shown in **FIG. 17**. The intense beam of light is used to trigger the signal absorbing action of a signal absorbing material (such as photochromic bisthiénylene) **3850** within the microsphere **S2**. Signal loss can be selectively applied by directing a modified laser beam **5010** exiting the illuminating fiber **3150** of the Mach-Zender interferometer **3250** at the microsphere, which triggers the action of the signal absorbing material **3850** through an adjustment of the “imaginary” portion of the dielectric constant ($i\epsilon_2$) of the microsphere **S2**.

[0241] Those skilled in the art will recognize that photochromic bisthiénylene is but one member of a broader group of photochromic materials which may be combined into the substrate of the microsphere to act as the light absorbing material. Moreover, other materials which have light absorbing properties and can be triggered by a specific quality or quantity of light outside the optical band may be used as the light absorbing material. Other material which can be selectively activated with the appropriate trigger which may include a beam of light, or electrical energy applied to the microsphere which in turn will pump the signal absorbing material to a higher energy state to provide for its signal absorbing activity include, but are not limited to, semi conductor nanoclusters, electrochromic nanocrystals, quantum dots, doped semi-conductor nanoclusters, semi conductors, PDLC, dihydroindolizines, diarylimylenes, ScGe, bis-Mienylperfluorocyclopentenes, spiropyrenes, fulgides, and dyes.

[0242] An optical filter **6004** with indirectly coupled subfilters **1150** and **1250** separated by, and fixed proximate to, an intermediary waveguide **W3** is shown in **FIG. 18**. The microsphere **S1** within the gate keeper subfilter **1150** is fixed to the intermediary waveguide **W3** upstream from the microsphere **S2** within the isolator **1250** subfilter. Accordingly, signal coupled from the gate keeper subfilter **1150** to the intermediary waveguide **W3** travels to the isolator subfilter **1250**.

[0243] The input, output and intermediary waveguides W1, W2 and W3 may be constructed from optical fibers. To provide greater amplitude of signal for coupling, the optical fibers may also be tapered. Although tapered fibers are illustrated in FIGS. 14-17, the use of tapered optical fibers is not a limitation and non-tapered optical fibers or other waveguides, including but not limited to semi-conductor waveguides formed from of semi-conductor material and constructed by lithographic methods used in the construction of semi-conductor waveguides, may be substituted for the tapered optical fibers.

[0244] In some instances the intermediary waveguide W3 may be constructed of an optical fiber in an end-to-end placement between the microspheres S1 and S2. One or both of the ends of an intermediary optical fiber in an end-to-end placement may be angled. The ends of the optical fiber in an end-to-end placement should be finished to support total internal reflection through which signal can couple to the subfilters.

[0245] As described in reference to FIGS. 14-17, the subfilters 1150 and 1250 each contain a microsphere S1 and S2 which resonates in WGM for a specific group of RS. The signal specific optical filter 50 is achieved by selecting a gate keeper subfilter 1150 and an isolator subfilter 1250 with only one RS in common (λ_{rs_2}) within the channels of the optical telecommunication band supplying the input signals λ_{rs_0} , λ_{rs_1} , λ_{rs_2} , λ_{rs_3} , . . . λ_{rs_n} .

[0246] In practice, the optical filter 6004 may be always "on" or switched "on/off" by the application of the previously discussed WGM controls or by signal loss.

[0247] To form a switched "on/off" optical filter utilizing a WGM control, a polarizing energy 5150 is applied to one of the microspheres S1 and S2 within the gatekeeper or isolator subfilter 1150 and 1250. The polarizing energy 5150 may come from the application of an electronic gate (described in reference to FIG. 15) or an optical gate (described in reference to FIG. 16).

[0248] As previously discussed the index of refraction of the microsphere " $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ " is known to be proportional to the square root of the "real" portion of its dielectric constant $\sqrt{\epsilon_1}$. Therefore, by applying an optical or electro optic effect to a microsphere, the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ can be adjusted to provide for the two WGM controls.

[0249] The first WGM control can switch "on/off" the filter based on adjustment of the index of refraction of a microsphere " $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ " to establish conditions which either support or do not support WGM resonance by the microsphere for the specific RS which the filter selects for.

[0250] The second WGM control can switch "on/off" the filter based on either disrupting or establishing coupling conditions between a microsphere and a waveguide. Polarization of the microsphere is used to adjust the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ relative to the index of refraction of a medium 1000 " n_{medium} " surrounding the microsphere. When the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ substantially equals n_{medium} at a coupling region (described in reference to FIG. 15 as a resonate structure-waveguide interface), the microsphere blends into the medium and is transparent to all signals. When the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ does not substantially equal the n_{medium} the microsphere is distinct from the medium and coupling can occur.

[0251] In the case of a signal loss "on/off" filter the signal absorbing action of a signal absorbing material within a microsphere is triggered by application of a trigger energy 5250, such as an intense beam of light, through the previously described adjustment of the "imaginary" portion of the dielectric constant ($i\epsilon_2$) of the microsphere.

[0252] A system comprised of a group of optical filters which optically cross connect waveguides and demultiplex (DEMUX) optical signals is shown in FIG. 19. The DEMUX system 6005 is constructed of "n" optical filters 1070 and 1070' fixed at a region proximate to an input waveguide W1 through which optical signals of different wavelengths (λ_{rs_0} , λ_{rs_1} , λ_{rs_2} , λ_{rs_3} . . . λ_{rs_n}), within "n" channels are supplied. Each optical filter 1070 and 1070' is also fixed at a region proximate to one of "n" output waveguides W2 and W2'. The most basic DEMUX system optically cross connects a signal between the single input waveguide and the "n" output waveguides W2 and W2'. The optical filters 1070 and 1070' shown in this embodiment are always "on" as described in detail in reference to FIG. 14.

[0253] Although directly coupled optical filters such as those described in reference to FIGS. 14-17 are shown, that illustration is not a limitation and the indirectly coupled optical filters 6004 described in reference to FIG. 18 may be substituted for the directly coupled optical filters.

[0254] To DEMUX the signals in the "n" channels from the single input waveguide W1 to "m" tertiary waveguides W4A, W4B, or W4C, optical switches 761A, 761B, 761C, 762A, 762B and 762C are placed at the intersections of the output waveguide W2, W2', W2" and the tertiary waveguides W4A, W4B, W4C or W4D. Optical switches 761A, 761B, 761C, 762A, 762B and 762C are preferred to avoid any optical electro optical conversion. Such optical switches may be resonate structures including the group consisting of stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, discs and microspheres plus resonate cavities. However, depending on the performance parameters of the DEMUX system 6005, non-optical switches may be used. The preferred optical switches 761A, 761B, 761C, 762A, 762B and 762C need not have the high "Q" needed to DEMUX closely spaced channels by the group of optical filters 1070 and 1070' because only a single RS is coupled from an optical filter 1070 and 1070' to the appropriate output waveguides W2 and W2'. Accordingly, the plurality of switches 761A, 761B, 761C, 762A, 762B and 762C need not discriminate closely spaced signals.

[0255] The microsphere within each of the optical switches 761A, 761B, 761C, 762A, 762B and 762C shown in FIG. 19 are electronically controlled as described in reference to FIG. 15. The illustration of an electronically controlled optical switch is not a limitation. One or more of the optical switches may also be optically controlled as described in reference to FIG. 16 and/or switched "on/off" by signal loss as described in reference to the optical filter shown in FIG. 17. Any of the optical switches 761A, 761B, 761C, 762A, 762B and 762C to which application of the second WGM control is desired should be placed in a medium 1000. Moreover, some of the switches may be always "on", while others are switched "on/off".

[0256] A multiplexing (MUX) system results from reversing the direction of signal so that each tertiary waveguides become signal input for one channel and the input waveguide becomes the output waveguide.

[0257] Shown in FIG. 20 is a group of "n" optical filters **5050** and **5050'** combined to demultiplex (DEMUX). The optical signals from "n" channels into "m" output waveguides **W2**, **W2'** and **W2''**. Each optical filter in the DEMUX system **7000** is constructed of a single gate keeper subfilter **711**, **711'** and **711''**, which resonates in WGM for a specific group of RS, and is fixed proximate to an input waveguide **W1** and an intermediary waveguide **W3**, **W3'** and **W3''**.

[0258] Fixed proximate to each intermediary waveguide **W3** and **W3'** and downstream from each gate keeper subfilter, are "n" groups of "m" redundant isolator subfilters **712A-A'** and **712B-B'**. Each group of each of "m" redundant isolator subfilters **712A-A'** and **712B-B'** contains a microsphere **S2A** and **S2B** which resonates in WGM for the same specific group of RS, one of which is also an RS of the corresponding gate keeper subfilter **711** or **711'**. The signal passes from a gate keeper subfilter **711** or **711'** to the appropriate intermediary waveguide **W3**, **W3'** or **W3''** and can couple with the one or more of the microspheres **S2A** or **S2B** within the corresponding group of redundant isolator subfilters **712A-A'** or **712B-B'**.

[0259] As described in reference to FIG. 18 a polarizing energy **5150** or a trigger energy **5250** may be applied to a subfilter to switch it "on/off" either through one of the WGM controls or through signal loss. If the second WGM control is to be applied, a medium **1000** with a known index of refraction should surround the affected subfilter.

[0260] Illustrated in FIG. 21 is an overview of a system and method, generally designated **6006** to construct an optical switch, or a group of optical filters such as those described in reference to FIG. 18, by using one or more optical traps to place and/or hold the WGM microspheres.

[0261] To fabricate an optical filter, movable optical traps **1000** & **1001** are generated within an assembly vessel **61**. The assembly vessel should be constructed of a material which is at least partially transparent, and which allows the light used to form optical traps to pass through in the desired location.

[0262] The optical traps **10000** & **10020** are used to manipulate small microspheres **S1** & **S2** and position them to construct an optical filter. Optical traps **10000** & **10020** can be formed by passing a collimated light, preferably a laser beam **5000**, to a phase patterning optical element **862** which generates beamlets **863** & **864**. Each beamlet **863** & **864** created by the phase patterning optical element **862** then passes through transfer optics **L1** & **L2** onward to a beam splitter **865**.

[0263] The beam splitter **865** provides two streams of light **866** & **867** oriented in different directions. The first light streams **866** originates from the phase patterning optical element **862** as beamlets **863** & **864** which are redirected by the beam splitter **865** through area "B" at the back aperture **868** of a focusing lens **869** thereby overlapping the beamlets **863** & **864** at the back aperture **868** of the focusing lens. In those embodiments in which the intensity of the beamlets **863** & **864** is less intense at the periphery and more intense at regions inward from the periphery, overfilling the back aperture **868** by less than about 15 percent is useful to form optical traps with greater intensity at the periphery of the optical traps than without overfilling the back aperture **868**.

[0264] The beamlets **863** & **864** are converged as they pass through the focusing lens **869** to form the optical traps **10000** & **10020** by producing the gradient conditions necessary to contain and manipulate the microspheres **S1** & **S2** in three dimensions. Only two sets of microspheres, beamlets, and optical traps are shown for clarity, but it should be understood that a greater or lesser number can be provided depending on the nature, scope, and other parameters of the assay and the capabilities of the system generating the optical traps. Altering the phase patterning optical element alters the phase profile of the beam, which can alter the position of the optical traps.

[0265] Any suitable laser can be used as the source of the laser beam **5000**. Useful lasers include solid state lasers, diode pumped lasers, gas lasers, dye lasers, alexanderite lasers, free electron lasers, VCSEL lasers, diode lasers, Ti-Sapphire lasers, doped YAG lasers, doped YLF lasers, diode pumped YAG lasers, and flash lamp-pumped YAG lasers. Diode-pumped Nd:YAG lasers operating between 10 mW and 5 W are preferred.

[0266] When the laser beam **5000** reflects off the phase patterning optical element **62**, the phase patterning optical element produces the beamlets **863** & **864**, each having a phase profile. Depending on the number and type of optical traps desired, the phase profile may be altered, the alteration may include diffraction, wavefront shaping, phase shifting, steering, diverging and converging. Based upon the phase profile chosen, the phase patterning optical element can be used to generate optical traps in the form of optical tweezers, optical vortices, optical bottles, optical rotators, light cages, and combinations of two or more of these forms.

[0267] Suitable phase patterning optical elements are characterized as transmissive or reflective depending on how they direct the focused beam of light or other source of energy. Transmissive diffractive optical elements transmit the beam of light or other source of energy, while reflective diffractive optical elements reflect the beam.

[0268] The phase patterning optical element can also be categorized as having a static or a dynamic surface. Examples of suitable static phase patterning optical elements include those with one or more fixed surface regions, such as gratings, including diffraction gratings, reflective gratings, and transmissive gratings, holograms, including polychromatic holograms, stencils, light shaping holographic filters, polychromatic holograms, lenses, mirrors, prisms, waveplates and the like.

[0269] Examples of suitable dynamic phase patterning optical elements having a time dependent aspect to their function include computer generated diffractive patterns, phase shifting materials, liquid crystal phase shifting arrays, micro-mirror arrays, including piston mode micro-mirror arrays, spatial light modulators, electro-optic deflectors, acousto-optic modulators, deformable mirrors, reflective MEMS arrays and the like. With a dynamic phase patterning optical element, the medium which comprises the phase patterning optical element can be altered, to impart a patterned phase shift to the focused beam of light which results in a corresponding change in the phase profile of the focused beam of light, such as diffraction or convergence. Additionally, the medium which comprises the phase patterning optical element can be altered to produce a change in the location of the optical traps. It is an advantage of dynamic

phase patterning optical elements, that the medium can be altered to independently move each optical trap.

[0270] Preferred dynamic optical elements include phase-only spatial light modulators such as the “PAL-SLM series X7665”, manufactured by Hamamatsu, of Japan or the “SLM 512SA7,” and “SLM512SA15” manufactured by Boulder Nonlinear Systems of Lafayette Colo. These phase patterning optical elements are computer controlled, by encoding a hologram within the medium, to generate the beamlets **10000** & **10020**.

[0271] The phase patterning optical element is also useful to impart a particular topological mode to the laser light. Accordingly, one beamlet may be formed into a Gauss-Laguerre mode while another beamlet may be formed in a gaussian mode.

[0272] Returning to the beam splitter, the beam splitter **865** also provides a second light stream **867** originating from an imaging illumination source **870**. The second light stream **867** passes through the working region **861** and beam splitter **865** and forms an optical data stream **872** which provides information on the position of the microspheres **S1** & **S2** in the working region **861**. The optical data stream can be converted to a video signal, monitored, or analyzed by visual inspection of an operator, spectroscopically, and/or video monitoring. The optical data stream **872** may also be processed **874** by a photodetector to monitor intensity, or any suitable device to convert the optical data stream to a digital data stream adapted for use by a computer.

[0273] To contain, position and hold a microsphere in a selected location, an operator and/or the computer can adjust the phase patterning optical element **862** to direct the movement of the optical traps **10000** & **10020** to first acquire the selected microsphere and contain it within an optical trap. An optical trap with a contained microsphere may then be reconfigured as to the position of the microsphere. The optical data stream **872** can be used to identify and/or monitor the position of one or more of the trapped. Based on the positional and identity information the holograph encoded in the medium of the phase patterning optical element **862** can be altered. Such alteration of the holograph can be used to change the type of optical trap as well as the position of the optical trap and a microsphere contained thereby.

[0274] In another of the inventions related to optical filters, **FIG. 22** depicts a filter **9000** constructed of a dielectric microsphere “S” fixed at a region proximate to an input waveguide **911** which supports signal propagation of a group of signals $\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2} \dots \lambda_{rs_n}$ each of which provides a corresponding evanescent wave along the waveguide **911**, and a secondary structure **912**. The secondary structure **912** should be a structure such as another waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide, a photonic crystal waveguide, a WGM microsphere or other resonate structure which supports signal propagation. The dielectric microsphere S resonates in WGM for a group of resonate signals “RS” ($\lambda_{rs_0}, \lambda_{rs_1}, \lambda_{rs_2}$) which can be obtained from the second equation ($d_c/q=RS$). Shown in **FIG. 26** is a table which indicates the RS within the “C” telecommunications optical band of three different diameter microspheres.

[0275] Proximate placement of the microsphere S to the input waveguide **911** and secondary structure **912** places the

microsphere S in a position to couple a light signal from the input waveguide **911** or to the secondary structure **912**. In practice the microsphere S will receive the evanescent wave of its RS, at a resonate structure-waveguide interface **914**, emanating from the input waveguide **911** and RS at a resonate structure-waveguide interface **914** to the secondary structure **912**.

[0276] “On/off” switching of the filter **9000** is controlled with an electronic control formed by placing an electrode pair E & E' conductively linked to a controller (not shown) by conductive leads **915** on opposing surfaces of the microsphere. The electronic gate provides an “on/off” function by a WGM control.

[0277] The WGM control mechanism is the polarization of the microsphere S. Polarization of the microsphere S can be achieved by a linear electro optic effect by passing an electrical power (a voltage or current) across the electrode pair E & E' on opposing surfaces of the microspheres. The linear electro optic effect can polarize the substrate of the microsphere by altering its dielectric constant “ $\epsilon_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ ”. The $\epsilon_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ has a “real” portion “ ϵ_1 ” and an imaginary portion “ $i\epsilon_2$ ”, and is the sum of both portions as shown in the third equation: $\epsilon_{rs}=(\epsilon_1+i\epsilon_2)$.

[0278] When $i\epsilon_2$ remains a constant, the index of refraction of the microsphere (resonate structure) $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ is known to be proportional to the square root of the “real” portion of the microsphere dielectric constant $\sqrt{\epsilon_1}$. Accordingly, $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ can be altered through the controlled change of ϵ_1 by the linear electro optic effect.

[0279] The WGM control set forth below results from either disrupting or establishing coupling conditions between the microsphere S and the input optical fiber **911** and/or the secondary structure **912** at one or more regions, which are resonate structure-waveguide interfaces **914**. Polarization of the microsphere S is used to adjust the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ relative to the index of refraction of a medium **1000** “ n_{medium} ” surrounding the microsphere S. To provide for the WGM control the medium **1000** should surround at least one of the input waveguide **911** and secondary structure **912** around the resonate structure waveguide interface **914**. The medium should have an electric-field-dependent index of refraction that ranges from a lower level that is below $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ to an upper level that is at least equal to $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ and the medium should not be a conductor.

[0280] When the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ substantially equals n_{medium} at a resonate structure-waveguide interface **914**, the microsphere S, at that resonate structure waveguide interface **914**, is effectively medium and transparent to all signals. When the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ does not substantially equal the n_{medium} , the microsphere S is distinct from the medium and signals can be filtered from the signals within the input waveguide **911** to the secondary structure **912**.

[0281] The filter **9000** may be either “on” or “off” in its default state. A default “on” filter is achieved when the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ is distinct from the n_{medium} at or near the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces **914** and coupling of signal to or from the microsphere is encouraged. The coupling of signal to or from the microsphere S at the input wave guide **911** or at the secondary structure **912** can be interrupted by the application of an electro optic effect via an electrode pair E & E' to cause the $n_{rs}^{(microsphere)}$ to become

substantially equal to the n_{medium} at the region of a resonate structure-waveguide interface **914**.

[0282] Conversely a default “off” optical switch is achieved when $n_{\text{rs}}^{(\text{microsphere})}$ substantially equals the index of refraction of the medium n_{medium} at the region of at least one of the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces **914**.

[0283] The microsphere **S** within the electronically controlled filter **9000** may also be coated with an optically active material **916** such as molecules of liquid crystal, organic photorefractive polymers, GaAs, Nitrobenzene and LiNbO_3 in which case the voltage or current passed between the electrode pair **915** and across the microsphere **S** can be used to polarize the coating material **916** and change its dielectric constant $\epsilon_1^{(\text{coated microsphere})}$ and thereby adjust its index of refraction “ $n_{\text{rs}}^{(\text{coated microsphere})}$ ”. Application of the WGM controls can therefore be applied to the microsphere via adjustment of the $n_{\text{rs}}^{(\text{coated microsphere})}$.

[0284] A filter **9020** with an optical control is shown in FIG. 23. As described in reference to FIG. 22, a microsphere “**S**” which resonates in WGM for a group of RS ($\lambda_{\text{rs}_0}, \lambda_{\text{rs}_1}, \lambda_{\text{rs}_2}$) is fixed proximate to the input waveguide **911** and the secondary structure **912**. In this embodiment the WGM control to switch “on/off” the filter remains the polarization of the microsphere **S**. However, polarization results from applying an intense beam of light to the microsphere **S**.

[0285] An optical control is used to selectively direct an intense beam of light at the microsphere **S**. A laser beam **5000**, directed through an illuminating fiber **922** into a Mach-Zender interferometer **924** to produce a modified laser beam **5010** exiting the Mach-Zender interferometer **924**, can pulse the intense beam of light in “optical real time”.

[0286] The Mach-Zender interferometer **924** is used to either intensify the laser beam **5000** through constructive interference or to weaken the laser beam **5000** through destructive interference. The Mach-Zender interferometer **924** operates in the picoseconds range and the modified laser beam **5010** directed at the microsphere **S** can occur or terminate in a similar time interval. A computer **926** is used to control the Mach-Zender interferometer **924**. The modified laser beam **5010** polarizes the microsphere **S** by effecting the “real” portion “ ϵ_1 ” of its dielectric constant “ $\epsilon^{(\text{micro-sphere})}$ ” and as previously described, the polarization can be used to adjust the $n_{\text{rs}}^{(\text{microsphere})}$ to substantially match n_{medium} and switch off the filter by creating a condition whereby the microsphere blends into the medium, or the $n_{\text{rs}}^{(\text{micro-sphere})}$ can be adjusted to switch “on” the filter by creating a condition whereby the microsphere **S** is distinct from the medium **1000**.

[0287] The microsphere **S** within the optically controlled filter **9020** may also be coated with an optically active material **916** in which case the optical effect can be used to adjust the $n_{\text{rs}}^{(\text{coated microsphere})}$ as described in reference to FIG. 23.

[0288] A system comprised of a group of optical filters which optically cross connect waveguides and demultiplex (DEMUX) optical signals is shown in FIG. 24. The DEMUX system **9030** is constructed of “**n**” groups of wavelength specific optical filters. Each of the “**n**” groups of filters contains “**m**” redundant optical filters **931A**, **913A'** and **931A"**, **931B**, **931B'** and **931B"**, and **931C**, **931C'** and **931C"**. Each group of the “**m**” redundant filters **931A**,

931A', **931A"**, **931B**, **931B'**, **931B"**, or **931C**, **931C'** and **931C"** resonates for the same RS. Each of the “**m**” redundant filters is fixed proximate to the input waveguide **W1** through which optical signals of a different wavelength ($\lambda_{\text{rs}_0}, \lambda_{\text{rs}_1}, \lambda_{\text{rs}_2}, \lambda_{\text{rs}_3} \dots \lambda_{\text{rs}_n}$) are supplied. One of the “**m**” redundant filters from each of the “**n**” groups is also fixed at a region proximate to one of “**m**” output waveguides **W2**, **W2'** and **W2"**, whereby the optical signals can be multiplexed (MUX) into the output waveguides **W2**, **W2'** and **W2"**. The entire DEMUX system is placed in a medium **1000** with a known index of refraction.

[0289] The WGM resonance of the microspheres “**S**” within each of the filters **931A**, **931A'**, **931A"**, **931B**, **931B'**, **931B"**, **931C**, **931C'** and **931C"** can be electronically or optically controlled (as described more fully in reference to FIG. 22 or 23) by application of a polarizing energy which is used to switch “off” a filter by adjusting the index of refraction of the microsphere $n_{\text{rs}}^{(\text{microsphere})}$ to substantially match the index of refraction of the medium n_{medium} .

[0290] Illustrated in FIG. 25 is an overview of a system and method, generally designated **9040** to construct an optical switch, or a group of optical filters such as those described in reference to FIG. 26, by using one or more optical traps to place and/or hold the WGM microspheres.

[0291] To fabricate an optical filter, movable optical traps **10000** & **10020** are generated within an assembly vessel **9419**. The assembly vessel should be constructed of a material which is at least partially transparent, and which allows the light used to form optical traps to pass through in the desired location.

[0292] The optical traps **10000** & **10020** are used to manipulate small microspheres **S1** & **S2** and position them to construct an optical filter. Optical traps **10000** & **10020** can be formed by passing a collimated light, preferably a laser beam **5000**, to area “**A**” to a phase patterning optical element **9429** which generates beamlets **9439** & **9449**. Each beamlet **9439** & **9449** created by the phase patterning optical element **9429** then passes through transfer optics **L1** & **L2** onward to a beam splitter **9459**.

[0293] The beam splitter **9459** provides two streams of light **9469** & **9479** oriented in different directions. The first light streams **9469** originates from the phase patterning optical element **9429** as beamlets **9439** & **9449** which are redirected by the beam splitter **9459** through area “**B**” at the back aperture **9489** of a focusing lens **9499** thereby overlapping the beamlets **9449** & **9459** at the back aperture **9489** of the focusing lens. In those embodiments in which the intensity of the beamlets **9439** & **9449** is less intense at the periphery and more intense at regions inward from the periphery, overfilling the back aperture **9489** by less than about 15 percent is useful to form optical traps with greater intensity at the periphery of the optical traps than without overfilling the back aperture **9489**.

[0294] The beamlets **9439** & **9449** are converged as they pass through the focusing lens **9499** to form the optical traps **10000** & **10020** by producing the gradient conditions necessary to contain and manipulate the microspheres **S1** & **S2** in three dimensions. Only two sets of microspheres, beamlets, and optical traps are shown for clarity, but it should be understood that a greater or lesser number can be provided depending on the nature, scope, and other parameters of the

assay and the capabilities of the system generating the optical traps. Altering the phase patterning optical element alters the phase profile of the beam, which can alter the position of the optical traps.

[0295] Any suitable laser can be used as the source of the laser beam **5000**. Useful lasers include solid state lasers, diode pumped lasers, gas lasers, dye lasers, alexanderite lasers, free electron lasers, VCSEL lasers, diode lasers, Ti-Sapphire lasers, doped YAG lasers, doped YLF lasers, diode pumped YAG lasers, and flash lamp-pumped YAG lasers. Diode-pumped Nd:YAG lasers operating between 10 mW and 5 W are preferred.

[0296] When the laser beam **5000** reflects off the phase patterning optical element **9629**, the phase patterning optical element produces the beamlets **9439** & **9449**, each having a phase profile. Depending on the number and type of optical traps desired, the phase profile may be altered, the alteration may include diffraction, wavefront shaping, phase shifting, steering, diverging and converging. Based upon the phase profile chosen, the phase patterning optical element can be used to generate optical traps in the form of optical tweezers, optical vortices, optical bottles, optical rotators, light cages, and combinations of two or more of these forms.

[0297] Suitable phase patterning optical elements are characterized as transmissive or reflective depending on how they direct the focused beam of light or other source of energy. Transmissive diffractive optical elements transmit the beam of light or other source of energy, while reflective diffractive optical elements reflect the beam.

[0298] The phase patterning optical element can also be categorized as having a static or a dynamic surface. Examples of suitable static phase patterning optical elements include those with one or more fixed surface regions, such as gratings, including diffraction gratings, reflective gratings, and transmissive gratings, holograms, including polychromatic holograms, stencils, light shaping holographic filters, polychromatic holograms, lenses, mirrors, prisms, waveplates and the like.

[0299] Examples of suitable dynamic phase patterning optical elements having a time dependent aspect to their function include computer generated diffractive patterns, phase shifting materials, liquid crystal phase shifting arrays, micro-mirror arrays, including piston mode micro-mirror arrays, spatial light modulators, electro-optic deflectors, acousto-optic modulators, deformable mirrors, reflective MEMS arrays and the like. With a dynamic phase patterning optical element, the medium which comprises the phase patterning optical element can be altered, to impart a patterned phase shift to the focused beam of light which results in a corresponding change in the phase profile of the focused beam of light, such as diffraction or convergence. Additionally, the medium which comprises the phase patterning optical element can be altered to produce a change in the location of the optical traps. It is an advantage of dynamic phase patterning optical elements, that the medium can be altered to independently move each optical trap.

[0300] Preferred dynamic optical elements include phase-only spatial light modulators such as the "PAL-SLM series X7665", manufactured by Hamamatsu, of Japan or the "SLM 512SA7," and "SLM512SA15" both manufactured by Boulder Nonlinear Systems of Lafayette Colo. These

phase patterning optical elements are computer controlled, by encoding a hologram within the medium, to generate the beamlets **10000** & **10020**.

[0301] The phase patterning optical element is also useful to impart a particular topological mode to the laser light. Accordingly, one beamlet may be formed into a Gauss-Laguerre mode while another beamlet may be formed in a gaussian mode.

[0302] Returning to the beam splitter, the beam splitter **9459** also provides a second light stream **9479** originating from an imaging illumination source **9500**. The second light stream **9479** passes through the working region **9419** and forms an optical data stream **9529** which provides information on the position of the microspheres **S1** & **S2** in the working region **9419**. The optical data stream can be converted to a video signal, monitored, or analyzed by visual inspection of an operator, spectroscopically, and/or video monitoring. The optical data stream **9529** may also be processed **9549** by a photodetector to monitor intensity, or any suitable device to convert the optical data stream to a digital data stream adapted for use by a computer.

[0303] To contain, position and hold a microsphere in a selected location, an operator and/or the computer can adjust the phase patterning optical element **9429** to direct the movement of the optical traps **10000** & **10020** to first acquire the selected microsphere and contain it within an optical trap. An optical trap with a contained microsphere may then be reconfigured as to the position of the microsphere. The optical data stream **9529** can be used to identify and/or monitor the position of one or more of the trapped. Based on the positional and identity information the holograph encoded in the medium of the phase patterning optical element **9429** can be altered. Such alteration of the holograph can be used to change the type of optical trap as well as the position of the optical trap and a microsphere contained thereby.

[0304] The above inventions may be employed in any application where the signal transmitted by the resonant structure is to be controlled thereby. For example, in an assay format, the resonant structure may be manufactured or modified post-manufacture by coating with a binding agent which binds to an analyte to be detected in a sample. In this invention, the presence of the analyte is detected by a change in frequency, attenuation or destruction of the resulting signal which comes about because of the binding of the analyte to the binding agent on the resonant structure upon exposure to the sample. Such a change in frequency, attenuation or destruction of the resulting signal may also be accomplished in a biological assay by competing away an analyte bound to a binding agent on the resonant structure prior to exposure to the sample. Examples of binding agent/analyte pairs include antigen/antibody, antibody/antigen, ligand/receptor, receptor/ligand, and nucleic acid/nucleic acid. Complexing agents, chelating agents and chemical bonding agents may also be employed. Techniques for preparing resonant structures, such as microspheres, are known to those skilled in the art and such preparation is available by contract manufacture, e.g. by Bangs Laboratories, Fishers, Ind.

[0305] Particular embodiments of the invention are described above in considerable detail for the purpose of illustrating its principles and operation. However, various

modifications may be made, and the scope of the invention is not limited to the exemplary embodiments described above.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of optically switching a signal the method comprising:

placing a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light, with a voltage alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of a first and a second optical fiber, in close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

placing a pair of electrodes on either side of the dielectric microsphere;

passing voltage, adequate to alter the steady state index of refraction "n" of the dielectric microsphere, through the pair of electrodes;

providing the specific wavelength of light, the dielectric microsphere resonates for, as a signal within the first optical fiber;

terminating the voltage whereby the index of refraction "n" of the dielectric microsphere returns to its steady state;

switching the signal from the first optical fiber across the dielectric microsphere to the second optical fiber; and,

reapplying the voltage.

2. A method of optically switching a signal the method comprising:

placing a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light, with a voltage alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially dissimilar to the index of refraction of a first and a second optical fiber, in close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

placing a pair of electrodes on either side of the dielectric microsphere;

providing the specific wavelength of light the dielectric microsphere resonates for, as a signal within the first optical fiber;

passing voltage adequate to alter the steady state index of refraction "n" of the dielectric microsphere, to become substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, through the pair of electrodes;

switching the signal from the first optical fiber across the dielectric microsphere to the second optical fiber; and,

terminating the voltage whereby the index of refraction "n" of the dielectric microsphere returns to its steady state.

3. A method of optical routing signals the method comprising:

providing a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

providing a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

placing two or more dielectric microspheres each capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light and each with a voltage alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

placing a pair of electrodes on either side of each dielectric microsphere;

passing voltage adequate to alter the steady state index of refraction "n" of each dielectric microsphere through the pair of electrodes;

providing a plurality of signals, each of a different wavelength, within an optical band in the first optical fiber;

selecting a signal to switch;

selecting the dielectric microsphere which resonates in WGM for the selected signal and terminating the voltage applied thereto, whereby the index of refraction "n" of the selected dielectric microsphere returns to its steady state;

switching the selected signal in the first optical fiber to the second optical fiber by the WGM resonance of the selected dielectric microsphere; and,

reapplying the voltage to the selected dielectric microsphere.

4. A method of optical routing signals the method comprising:

providing a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

providing a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

placing two or more dielectric microspheres each capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light and each with a voltage alterable steady state index of refraction "n" dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

placing a pair of electrodes on either side of each dielectric microsphere;

providing a plurality of signals, each of a different wavelength, within an optical band in the first optical fiber;

selecting a signal to switch;

selecting the dielectric microsphere which resonates in WGM for the selected signal and applying voltage to it, across the pair of electrodes, whereby the steady state index of refraction "n" of the selected dielectric microsphere is altered to become substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers;

switching the selected signal in the first optical fiber to the second optical fiber by the WGM resonance of the selected dielectric microsphere; and,

terminating the voltage applied to the selected dielectric microsphere.

5. An optical switch comprising:
 - a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a voltage alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in a fixed proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers; and
 - a pair of electrodes on either side of the dielectric microsphere.
6. An optical switch comprising:
 - a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a voltage alterable steady state index of refraction "n" dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in a fixed proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers; and
 - a pair of electrodes on either side of the dielectric microsphere.
7. An optical router comprising:
 - a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - a plurality of optical switches each comprising:
 - a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a voltage alterable steady state index of refraction "n" dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in a fixed proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers; and,
 - a pair of electrodes on either side of the dielectric microsphere.
8. An optical router comprising:
 - a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - a plurality of optical switches each comprising:
 - a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a voltage alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in a fixed proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers; and,
 - a pair of electrodes on either side of the dielectric microsphere.
9. A method of optically switching a signal the method comprising:
 - placing a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light, with a light alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of a first and

- second optical fiber, in close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;
 - directing a sufficiently intense beam of light at the microsphere, whereby its steady state index of refraction "n" is altered;
 - providing the specific wavelength of light the dielectric microsphere resonates for, as a signal within the first optical fiber;
 - terminating the sufficiently intense beam of light whereby the index of refraction "n" of the dielectric microsphere returns to its steady state;
 - switching the signal from the first optical fiber across the dielectric microsphere to the second optical fiber; and,
 - reapplying the sufficiently intense beam of light.
10. A method of optically switching a signal the method comprising:
 - placing a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light, with a light alterable steady state index of refraction "n" dissimilar to the index of refraction of a first and second optical fiber, in close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;
 - providing the specific wavelength of light the dielectric microsphere resonates for, as a signal within the first optical fiber;
 - directing a sufficiently intense beam of light at the microsphere whereby the index of refraction "n" of the dielectric microsphere becomes substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers;
 - switching the signal from the first optical fiber across the dielectric microsphere to the second optical fiber; and,
 - terminating the intense beam of light.
 11. A method of optical routing signal the method comprising:
 - providing a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - providing a second optical fiber-with an unclad or thinly clad region;
 - placing two or more dielectric microsphere each capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light and each with a light alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;
 - directing a sufficiently intense beam of light at each dielectric microsphere, whereby the steady state index of refraction "n" is altered;
 - providing a plurality of signals, each of a different wavelength, within an optical band in the first optical fiber;
 - selecting a signal to switch;
 - selecting the dielectric microsphere and terminating the sufficiently intense beam of light applied thereto, whereby the index of refraction "n" of the dielectric microsphere returns to its steady state;

switching the selected signal in the first optical fiber to the second optical fiber by the WGM resonance of the selected dielectric microsphere; and,

reapplying the sufficiently intense beam of light to the selected dielectric microsphere.

12. A method of optical routing signal the method comprising:

providing a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

providing a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

placing two or more dielectric microspheres each capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light and each with a light alterable steady state index of refraction "n" dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

providing a plurality of signals, each of-a different wavelength, within an optical band in the first optical fiber;

selecting a signal to switch;

selecting the dielectric microsphere and directing a sufficiently intense beam of light applied thereto, whereby the index of refraction "n" of the dielectric microsphere becomes substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers;

switching the selected signal in the first optical fiber to the second optical fiber by the WGM resonance of the selected dielectric microsphere; and,

terminating the sufficiently intense beam of light directed at the selected dielectric microsphere.

13. An optical switch comprising:

a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a light alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in a fixed proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

an illuminating fiber with a first end directed at the dielectric microsphere and a second end adapted to receive a laser beam; and,

a Mach-Zender interferometer placed between the first and second end of the illuminating fiber.

14. An optical switch comprising:

a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a light alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in a fixed proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

an illuminating fiber with a first end directed at the dielectric microsphere and a second end adapted to receive a laser beam;

a Mach-Zender interferometer placed between the first and second end of the illuminating fiber.

15. An optical router comprising:

a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a plurality of optical switches each comprising:

a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a light alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in a fixed proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

an illuminating fiber with a first end directed at the dielectric microsphere and a second end adapted to receive a laser beam;

a Mach-Zender interferometer placed between the first and second end of the illuminating fiber.

16. An optical router comprising:

a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a plurality of optical switches each comprising:

a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a light alterable steady state index of refraction "n" substantially dissimilar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, in a fixed proximity to the unclad or thinly clad regions of the first and second optical fibers;

an illuminating fiber with a first end directed at the dielectric microsphere and a second end adapted to receive a laser beam;

a Mach-Zender interferometer placed between the first and second end of the illuminating fiber.

17. A method of optically switching a signal the method comprising:

providing a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

providing a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

containing a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light with a steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, within an optical trap;

providing the specific wavelength of light as a signal within the first optical fiber; moving the dielectric microsphere contained within the optical trap in close proximity with an unclad or thinly clad region of the optical fibers;

switching the signal from the first optical fiber across the dielectric microsphere to the second optical fiber; and,

moving the dielectric microsphere contained within the optical trap out of close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad region optical fibers.

18. A method of optically routing a signal the method comprising:

providing a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

providing a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

containing two or more dielectric microspheres, each capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light and each with a steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers, each within an optical trap;

providing a plurality of signals, each of a different wavelength, within a channel in the first optical fiber;

selecting a signal to switch;

moving a dielectric microsphere, which can resonate in WGM for the selected signal, contained within an optical trap into close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad region of the optical fibers; and

switching the signal via WGM across the dielectric microsphere to the second optical fiber; and,

moving the selected dielectric microsphere out of close proximity with the unclad or thinly clad region of the optical fibers.

19. An optical switch comprising:

a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

an optical trap; and

a dielectric microsphere capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light contained within the optical trap which has a steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers.

20. An optical router comprising:

a first optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a second optical fiber with an unclad or thinly clad region;

a plurality of optical traps; and

a plurality of dielectric microspheres each capable of WGM resonance for a specific wavelength of light and each contained within an optical trap which has a steady state index of refraction "n" substantially similar to the index of refraction of the optical fibers.

21. The method of claim 1 wherein the signal is within the wavelengths of an optical band within an optical network.

22. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 nanoseconds.

23. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 10 nanoseconds.

24. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 1 nanosecond.

25. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 900 picoseconds.

26. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 800 picoseconds.

27. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 700 picoseconds.

28. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 600 picoseconds.

29. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 500 picoseconds.

30. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 250 picoseconds.

31. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 125 picoseconds.

32. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 75 picoseconds.

33. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 50 picoseconds.

34. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 picoseconds.

35. The method of claim 1 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 10 picoseconds.

36. The method of claim 2 wherein the signal is within the wavelengths of an optical band within an optical network.

37. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 nanoseconds.

38. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 10 nanoseconds.

39. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 1 nanosecond.

40. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 900 picoseconds.

41. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 800 picoseconds.

42. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 700 picoseconds.

43. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 600 picoseconds.

44. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 500 picoseconds.

45. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 250 picoseconds.

46. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 125 picoseconds.

47. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 75 picoseconds.

48. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 50 picoseconds.

49. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 picoseconds.

50. The method of claim 2 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 10 picoseconds.

51. The method of claim 3 wherein at least one signal is within the wavelengths of an optical band within an optical network.

52. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 nanoseconds.

53. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 10 nanoseconds.

54. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 1 nanosecond.

55. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 900 picoseconds.

56. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 800 picoseconds.

57. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 700 picoseconds.

58. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 600 picoseconds.

59. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 500 picoseconds.

60. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 250 picoseconds.

61. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 125 picoseconds.

62. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 75 picoseconds.

63. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 50 picoseconds.

64. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 picoseconds.

65. The method of claim 3 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 10 picoseconds.

66. The method of claim 4 wherein at least one signal is within the wavelengths of an optical band within an optical network.

67. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 nanoseconds.

68. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 10 nanoseconds.

69. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 1 nanosecond.

70. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 900 picoseconds.

71. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 800 picoseconds.

72. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 700 picoseconds.

73. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 600 picoseconds.

74. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 500 picoseconds.

75. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 250 picoseconds.

76. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 125 picoseconds.

77. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 75 picoseconds.

78. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 50 picoseconds.

79. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 picoseconds.

80. The method of claim 4 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 10 picoseconds.

81. The optical switch of claim 5 wherein at least one of the thinly or unclad regions of the first and second optical fibers is tapered.

82. The optical switch of claim 6 wherein at least one of the thinly or unclad regions of the first and second optical fibers is tapered.

83. The optical router of claim 7 wherein at least one of the thinly or unclad regions of the first and second optical fibers is tapered.

84. The optical router of claim 8 wherein at least one of the thinly or unclad regions of the first and second optical fibers is tapered.

85. The method of claim 9 wherein the sufficiently intense beam of light is a laser beam.

86. The method of claim 9 wherein the signal is within the wavelengths of an optical band within an optical network.

87. The method of claim 85 wherein the laser beam passes through a Mach-Zender interferometer and the brief termination of the laser beam is controlled by the Mach-Zender interferometer.

88. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 25 nanoseconds.

89. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 10 nanoseconds.

90. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 1 nanosecond.

91. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 900 picoseconds.

92. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 800 picoseconds.

93. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 700 picoseconds.

94. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 600 picoseconds.

95. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 500 picoseconds.

96. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 250 picoseconds.

97. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 125 picoseconds.

98. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 75 picoseconds.

99. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 50 picoseconds.

100. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 25 picoseconds.

101. The method of claim 87 wherein the brief termination of the laser beam is for less than about 10 picoseconds.

102. The optical router of claim 10 wherein at least one of the thinly or unclad regions of the first and second optical fibers is tapered.

103. The method of claim 10 wherein the signal is within the wavelengths of an optical band within an optical network.

104. The method of claim 10 wherein the sufficiently intense beam of light is a laser beam.

105. The method of claim 104 wherein the laser beam passes through a Mach-Zender interferometer and the directing of the laser beam at the microsphere is controlled by the Mach-Zender interferometer.

106. The method of claim 105 wherein the brief termination of voltage is for less than about 25 nanoseconds.

107. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 10 nanoseconds.

108. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 1 nanosecond.

109. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 900 picoseconds.

110. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 800 picoseconds.

111. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 700 picoseconds.

112. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 600 picoseconds.

113. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 500 picoseconds.

114. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 250 picoseconds.

115. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 125 picoseconds.

116. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 75 picoseconds.

117. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 50 picoseconds.

118. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 25 picoseconds.

119. The method of claim 105 wherein the laser beam is directed at the microsphere for less than about 10 picoseconds.

120. The method of claim 11 wherein each sufficiently intense beam of light is a laser beam.

121. The method of claim 11 wherein the signal is within the wavelengths of an optical band within an optical network.

122. The method of claim 120 wherein each laser beam passes through a Mach-Zender interferometer and the termination of each laser beam is controlled by the Mach-Zender interferometer.

123. The method of claim 12 wherein each sufficiently intense beam of light is a laser beam.

124. The method of claim 12 wherein the signal is within the wavelengths of an optical band within an optical network.

125. The method of claim 123 wherein each laser beam passes through a Mach-Zender interferometer and the directing of the laser beam at the microsphere is controlled by the Mach-Zender interferometer.

126. The optical switch of claim 13 further comprising a computer connected to the Mach-Zender interferometer, whereby the constructive or destructive interference the Mach-Zender interferometer can apply to a laser beam within the illuminating fiber is controlled.

127. The optical switch of claim 14 further comprising a computer connected to the Mach-Zender interferometer, whereby the constructive or destructive interference the Mach-Zender interferometer can apply to a laser beam within the illuminating fiber is controlled.

128. The optical router of claim 15 further comprising a computer connected to each Mach-Zender interferometer, whereby the constructive or destructive interference the Mach-Zender interferometer can apply to a laser beam within the illuminating fiber is controlled.

129. The optical router of claim 16 further comprising a computer connected to each Mach-Zender interferometer, whereby the constructive or destructive interference the Mach-Zender interferometer can apply to a laser beam within the illuminating fiber is controlled.

130. An optical filter comprising:

- a WGM resonate structure fixed in a medium with a known index of refraction that is distinct from the index of refraction of the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure;

an input waveguide affixed at a region proximate to the WGM resonate structure; and

an output waveguide affixed at a region proximate to the WGM resonate structure.

131. The optical filter of claim 130 further comprising a resonate structure-medium interface formed where the medium surrounds the WGM resonate structure.

132. The optical filter of claim 130 wherein the distinction between the indices of refraction of the WGM resonate structure and the medium is sufficient to cause a condition of total internal reflection.

133. The optical filter of claim 130 wherein the WGM resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of microspheres, stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, or discs.

134. The optical filter of claim 130 wherein the WGM resonate structure is dielectric.

135. The optical filter of claim 130 wherein the WGM resonate structure is a microsphere.

136. The optical filter of claim 135 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 90 micro in diameter.

137. The optical filter of claim 135 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 75 microns in diameter.

138. The optical filter of claim 135 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 50 microns in diameter.

139. The optical filter of claim 135 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 29 microns in diameter.

140. The optical filter of claim 135 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 25 microns in diameter.

141. The optical filter of claim 135 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 19 microns in diameter.

142. The optical filter of claim 135 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 9 microns in diameter.

143. The optical filter of claim 130 wherein the waveguide is selected from the group consisting of an optical fiber, a tapered optical fiber, a semi-conductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide, or a photonic crystal waveguide.

144. The optical filter of claim 143 wherein the waveguide is an optical fiber with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

145. The optical filter of claim 143 wherein the optical fiber is tapered at the area of reduced cladding.

146. The optical filter of claim 130 wherein the medium has an index of refraction of about 1.52 and the WGM resonate structure has an index of refraction of greater than 1.5.

147. An optical filter comprising:

- a WGM resonate structure fixed in a medium, with a known index of refraction that is distinct from the index of refraction of the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure;

an input waveguide affixed at a region proximate to the WGM resonate structure;

an output waveguide affixed at a region proximate to the WGM resonate structure; and

a means to switch "on/off" the optical filter.

148. The optical filter of claim 147 wherein a WGM resonate structure is a microsphere.

149. The optical filter of claim 148 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 90 microns in diameter.

150. The optical filter of claim 148 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 75 microns in diameter.

151. The optical filter of claim 148 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 50 microns in diameter.

152. The optical filter of claim 148 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 29 microns in diameter.

153. The optical filter of claim 148 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 25 microns in diameter.

154. The optical filter of claim 148 wherein the, microsphere is between about 2 to about 19 microns in diameter.

155. The optical filter of claim 148 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 9 microns in diameter.

156. The optical filter of claim 148 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 8 microns in diameter.

157. The optical filter of claim 147 further comprising a resonate structure-medium interface formed where the medium surrounds the WGM resonate structure.

158. The optical filter of claim 157 wherein the distinction between the indices of refraction of the WGM resonate structure and the medium is sufficient to cause a condition of total internal reflection at the resonate structure-medium interface.

159. The optical filter of claim 147 further comprising a resonate structure waveguide interface formed at each of the proximate regions.

160. The optical filter of claim 159 wherein the means to switch "on/off" the optical filter is the adjustment of the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure at one or more of the resonate structure waveguide interfaces.

161. The optical filter of claim 160 wherein the adjustment of the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure is electrical.

162. The optical filter of claim 161 further comprising:

a pair of electrodes, each with a conductive contact lead, placed on either side of the WGM resonate structure; and

a controller attached to the conductive leads, whereby the flow of electricity to the conductive leads can be selected.

163. The optical filter of claim 160 wherein the adjustment of the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure is optical.

164. The optical filter of claim 163 further comprising a laser beam directed at the WGM resonate structure.

165. The optical filter of claim 164 further comprising a Mach-Zender interferometer to produce the laser beam.

166. The optical filter of claim 147 wherein the "on/off" means is a controlled signal loss within the WGM resonate structure.

167. The optical filter of claim 166 further comprising:

a triggerable signal absorbing material within the WGM resonate structure; and

a trigger means for activating the signal absorbing material.

168. The optical filter of claim 167 wherein the trigger means is an intense beam of light directed at the WGM resonate structure.

169. The optical filter of claim 168 wherein the intense beam of light is a laser beam.

170. The optical filter of claim 169 further comprising a Mach-Zender interferometer to produce the laser beam.

171. The optical filter of claim 159 wherein at least one of the waveguides is an optical fiber with a region of reduced cladding at the resonate structure waveguide interface.

172. The optical filter of claim 171 wherein at least one of the optical fibers is tapered.

173. The optical filter of claim 147 wherein at least one of the input and output waveguides is selected from the group consisting of a semi-conductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide or a photonic crystal waveguide.

174. A system to demultiplex optical signals comprising

"n" wavelength specific optical filters, each containing a WGM resonate structure fixed in a medium, with a known index of refraction that is distinct from the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure;

a single input waveguide fixed proximate to the optical filters, whereby optical signal can propagate from the input waveguide to a WGM resonate structure; and

"n" output waveguides, each fixed proximate to one of the "n" optical filters, whereby optical signals can propagate from an optical filter to the output waveguide.

175. The system of claim 172 wherein at least one of the WGM resonate structures is a microsphere.

176. The system of claim 172 wherein the WGM resonate structure are microspheres.

177. The system of claim 176 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 90 microns in diameter.

178. The system of claim 176 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 75 microns in diameter.

179. The system of claim 176 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 50 microns in diameter.

180. The system of claim 176 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 29 microns in diameter.

181. The system of claim 176 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 25 microns in diameter.

182. The system of claim 176 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 19 microns in diameter.

183. The system of claim 176 wherein the microsphere is between about 2 to about 9 microns in diameter.

184. The system of claim 174 further comprising an electronic "on/off" means for adjusting the index of refraction of at least one of the WGM resonate structures.

185. The system of claim 184 wherein the electronic "on/off" means comprises:

a pair of electrodes, each with a conductive lead, placed on either side of the WGM microsphere, whereby electrical power can pass across the microsphere; and

a controller attached to the conductive leads, whereby the flow of electricity to the conductive leads can be selected.

186. The system of claim 174 further comprising an optical "on/off" means for adjusting the index of refraction of at least one microsphere.

187. The system of claim 186 wherein the optical means is a laser beam directed at the microsphere within the at least one optical switch.

188. The system of claim 187 further comprising at least one Mach-Zender interferometer to produce each laser beam.

189. The system of claim 174 further comprising:

a triggerable signal absorbing material within at least one WGM resonate structure; and

a trigger means for activating the signal absorbing material within the at least one WGM resonate structure.

190. The system of claim 189 wherein the signal absorbing material is photochromic

191. A method of optical filtering comprising:

forming a resonate structure-medium interface by surrounding a WGM resonate structure with a medium that has an index of refraction distinct from the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure;

establishing a condition of total internal reflection from the difference between the indexes of refraction of the medium and the WGM resonate structure at the resonate structure medium interface to.

providing a plurality of input optical signals within a predetermined optical band to the WGM resonate structure;

coupling at least one optical signal which is a resonate signal of the WGM resonate structure to the WGM resonate structure;

providing the at least one optical signal from the dielectric WGM resonate structure as an output optical signal.

192. The method of claim 191 the method further comprising:

providing the input signals within a waveguide fixed at a region proximate to the WGM resonate structure;

providing an output waveguide to receive the output fixed at a region proximate to the WGM resonate structure to receive the output optical signals.

193. The method of claim 192 the method further comprising forming a resonate structure-wavelength interface at each proximate region.

194. The method of claim 193 further comprising switching the filter "on/off" by applying a WGM control to at least one resonate structure-waveguide interface.

195. The method of claim 194 wherein the applied WGM control is the polarization of a resonate structure.

196. The method of claim 195 wherein the polarization adjusts the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure, at one or more resonate structure-waveguide interfaces, to become substantially equal to the index of refraction of the medium.

197. The method of claim 195 wherein the polarization adjusts the index of refraction of the WGM resonate wave structure whereby it no longer resonates for optical signals within the predetermined optical band.

198. The method of claim 195 wherein the polarization is caused by passing electrical power across the WGM resonate structure.

199. The method of claim 195 wherein the polarization is produced by directing an intense beam of light at the resonate structure.

200. The method of claim 192 the method further comprising adding the optical signal to the output waveguide.

201. The method of claim 193 the method further comprising switching the filter "on/off" by a signal loss control.

202. The method of claim 201 wherein the signal loss control is selectively applying a trigger to activate the signal absorbing material within the WGM resonate structure whereby WGM is disrupted by the signal loss.

203. A method to demultiplex optical signals comprising:

providing "n" optical signals of different wavelengths, in a single input waveguide to "n" optical filters, each of the "n" optical filters containing a WGM resonate structure surrounded by a medium, which resonates in WGM for one of the "n" optical signals;

coupling the corresponding optical signal from the output waveguide to each optical filter; and

providing as output from each of the "n" optical filters one of the "n" optical signals.

204. The method to demultiplex of claim 203 the method further comprising coupling the output from each of the "n" optical filters to one of the "n" output waveguides.

205. An optical filter comprising:

a WGM resonate structure; and,

a triggerable signal absorbing material within the substrate of the WGM resonate structure.

206. The optical filter of claim 205 further comprising a trigger means which can cause the signal absorbing material to absorb signal.

207. The optical filter of claim 206 wherein the trigger means is an intense beam of light directed at the resonate structure.

208. The optical filter of claim 205 wherein the resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of microspheres, stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, and discs.

209. The optical filter of claim 205 wherein the resonate structure is dielectric.

210. The optical filter of claim 209 wherein the dielectric resonate structure is a microsphere.

211. The optical filter of claim 210 wherein the microsphere is between about 10 to 200 microns in diameter.

212. The optical filter of claim 210 wherein the microsphere is less than about 30 microns.

213. The optical filter of claim 210 wherein the microsphere is less than about 10 microns.

214. The optical filter of claim 205 wherein the signal absorbing material is a photochromic material.

215. The optical filter of claim 214 wherein the photochromic material is photochromic bisthiethylene.

216. The optical filter of claim 207 wherein the intense beam of light is a laser beam.

217. An optical filter comprising:

an input waveguide;

a secondary structure which supports signal propagation;

a WGM resonate structure fixed at a region proximate to the input waveguide and the secondary structure; and,

a triggerable signal absorbing material within the WGM resonate structure.

218. The optical filter of claim 217 further comprising a trigger means for activating the signal absorbing material within the WGM resonate structure.

219. The optical filter of claim 217 further comprising a resonate structure-waveguide interface formed at each of the proximate regions.

220. The optical filter of claim 217 wherein the trigger means is an intense beam of light directed at the WGM resonate structure.

221. The optical filter of claim 217 wherein the WGM resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of microspheres, stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, and discs.

222. The optical filter of claim 217 wherein the resonate structure is dielectric.

223. The optical filter of claim 222 wherein the dielectric resonate structure is a microsphere.

224. The optical filter of claim 223 wherein the microsphere is between about 10 to 200 microns in diameter.

225. The optical filter of claim 223 wherein the microsphere is less than about 30 microns.

226. The optical filter of claim 223 wherein the microsphere is less than about 10 microns.

227. The optical filter of claim 223 wherein the signal absorbing material is a photochromic material.

228. The optical filter of claim 227 wherein the photochromic material is photochromic bithienylethene.

229. The optical filter of claim 220 wherein the intense beam of light is a laser beam.

230. The optical filter of claim 217 wherein the input waveguide is an optical fiber with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

231. The optical filter of claim 230 wherein the optical fiber is tapered at the area of reduced cladding.

232. The optical switch of claim 217 wherein the secondary structure is selected from the group consisting of a waveguide, an optical fiber, a tapered optical fiber, a semiconductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide, and a photonic crystal waveguide.

233. The optical switch of claim 229 further comprising a Mach-Zender interferometer to produce the laser beam.

234. A system to demultiplex optical signals:

“n” groups of optical filters, each of which contains a WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for the a different resonate signal;

an input waveguide fixed at a region proximate to each of the “n” optical filters, whereby optical signal propagation from the input waveguide to the optical filter can occur;

a triggerable signal absorbing material within at least one of the WGM resonate structures; and

“n” output waveguides each fixed at a region proximate to one of the “n” optical filters, whereby optical signal propagation from the optical filter to the output waveguide can occur.

235. The system of claim 234 further comprising a resonate structure-waveguide interface formed at each of the proximate regions.

236. The system of claim 234 further comprising a trigger consisting of an intense beam of light applied to at least one resonate structure which contains signal absorbing material.

237. The system of claim 236 wherein the intense beam of light is a laser beam.

238. The system of claim 237 further comprising at least one Mach-Zender interferometer to produce each laser beam.

239. The system of claim 234 wherein the resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of microspheres, stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, and discs.

240. The system of claim 234 wherein at least one of the resonate structures is a microsphere.

241. The system of claim 240 wherein each microsphere is between about 10 to 200 microns in diameter.

242. The system of claim 240 wherein at least one microsphere is less than about 10 microns.

243. The system of claim 234 wherein the signal absorbing material is a photochromic material.

244. The system of claim 243 wherein the photochromic material is bithienylethene.

245. The system of claim 235 wherein at least one of the input and output waveguides is an optical fiber with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

246. The system of claim 245 wherein each optical fiber is tapered at the area of reduced cladding.

247. The system of claim 234 wherein each of the input and output waveguides is selected from the group consisting of an optical fiber, a tapered optical fiber, a semiconductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide and a photonic crystal waveguide.

248. A system to demultiplex and multiplex optical signals comprising:

“n” groups of “m” redundant optical filters, each of the “m” redundant optical filters in each of the “n”: groups contains a WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for the same group of resonate signals;

an input waveguide fixed at a region proximate to each optical filter, whereby optical signal propagation from the input waveguide to the optical filter can occur,

a triggerable signal absorbing material within at least one of the a WGM resonate structures; and

“m” output waveguides each fixed at a region proximate to one of the “m” optical filters in each of the “n” groups.

249. The system of claim 248 further comprising a resonate structure-waveguide interface formed at each of the proximate regions.

250. The system of claim 249 further comprising a trigger consisting of an intense beam of light applied to at least one resonate structure which contains signal absorbing material.

251. The system of claim 250 wherein the intense beam of light is a laser beam.

252. The system of claim 251 further comprising at least one Mach-Zender interferometer to produce each laser beam.

253. The system of claim 248 wherein the resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of microspheres, stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, and discs.

254. The system of claim 248 wherein at least one of the resonate structures is a microsphere.

255. The system of claim 254 wherein each microsphere is between about 10 to 200 microns in diameter.

256. The system of claim 254 wherein at least one microsphere is less than about 10 microns.

257. The system of claim 248 wherein the signal absorbing material is a photochromic material.

258. The system of claim 257 wherein the photochromic material is bithienylethene.

259. The system of claim 249 wherein at least one of the input and output waveguides is an optical fiber with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

260. The system of claim 259 wherein each optical fiber is tapered at the area of reduced cladding.

261. The system of claim 248 wherein each of the input and output waveguides is selected from the group consisting of an optical fiber, a tapered optical fiber, a semi-conductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide and a photonic crystal waveguide.

262. A method of switching “on/off” an optical filter comprising:

coupling an optical signal to a WGM resonate structure which contains a triggerable signal absorbing material;

coupling the optical signal from the WGM resonate structure to a secondary structure which supports signal propagation; and,

selectively applying a trigger to the signal absorbing material within the WGM resonate structure whereby the filter is switched “on/off” through disruption of WGM resonance caused by signal loss.

263. The method of claim 262 wherein the trigger is an intense beam of light directed at the resonate structure.

264. The method of claim 263 wherein the intense beam of light is a laser beam.

265. The method of claim 262 wherein the optical signal is within a channel within an optical telecommunications band.

266. The method of claim 262 wherein the secondary structure is an output waveguide.

267. The method of claim 266 the method further comprising adding an optical signal to the output waveguide.

268. A method to demultiplex optical signals:

providing optical signals of at least two different wavelengths within a single input waveguide, to at least two optical filters each containing a WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for a group of resonate signals;

coupling optical signals, which are the resonate signals for a WGM resonate structure, from the input waveguide to the corresponding optical filter;

selectively applying a trigger to a signal absorbing material in at least one WGM resonate structures, whereby a signal loss which disrupts the WGM resonance of that WGM resonate structure results; and

providing as output signals, from each optical filter in which WGM resonance has not been disrupted, the optical signals corresponding to its resonate signals.

269. The method of claim 268 the method further comprising providing the output signals of each optical filter to a separate output waveguide.

270. The method of claim 268 wherein the trigger is an intense beam of light.

271. A method to demultiplex optical signals:

providing optical signals of different wavelengths within a single input waveguide, to “n” groups of “m” redundant optical filters, each of the “m” redundant optical filters in each of the “n” groups contains a WGM

resonate structure which resonates in WGM for the same group of resonate signals;

coupling optical signals, which are the resonate signals for a WGM resonate structure, from the input waveguide to the corresponding optical filters;

selectively applying a trigger to-a signal absorbing material in at least one WGM resonate structures, whereby a signal loss which disrupts the WGM resonance of that WGM resonate structure results; and

providing as output signals, from each of the “m” optical filter in which WGM resonance has not been disrupted, the optical signals corresponding to its resonate signals.

272. The method of claim 271 wherein the trigger is an intense beam of light.

273. The method of claim 271 the method further comprising multiplexing the output signals by providing the “m” output waveguides, each waveguide being fixed proximate to one of the “m” optical filters in each of the “n” groups, whereby output signals from each of the “n” groups of optical filters may be coupled to one of the “m” output waveguides.

274. The optical filter of claim 217 wherein the signal absorbing material is selected from the group consisting of semi conductor nanoclusters, electrochromic nanocrystals, quantum dots, doped semi-conductor nanoclusters, liquid crystals, semi conductors, and dyes.

275. The optical filter of claim 217 wherein the signal absorbing material is selected from the group consisting of

dihydroindolizines, diarylimylenes, ScGe, bis-Mienylperfluorocyclopentenes, spiropyrenes, and fulgides.

276. An optical filter comprising:

an input waveguide;

a first subfilter, which can switch a first group of resonate signals, fixed proximate to the input waveguide;

a second subfilter, which can switch a second group of resonate signals, one is also a resonate signal of the first subfilter, fixed proximate to the first subfilter; and

an output waveguide fixed proximate to the second subfilter.

277. The optical filter of claim 276 wherein the first and second subfilters each contain a WGM resonate structure.

278. The optical filter of claim 277 wherein each WGM resonate structure is a microsphere.

279. An optical filter comprising:

an input waveguide;

a first subfilter, which can switch a first group of resonate signals, fixed proximate to the input waveguide, whereby the first subfilter can receive optical signals travelling within the input waveguide;

a second subfilter which can switch a second group of resonate signals one of which is also a resonate signal of the first subfilter, fixed proximate to the first subfilter, whereby the second subfilter can receive optical signals from the first subfilter;

an output waveguide fixed proximate to the second subfilter; and

an “on/off” means for controlling at least one of the first and second subfilter.

280. An optical filter comprising:

an input waveguide;

an output waveguide;

a first WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for a first group of resonate signals fixed proximate to the input waveguide forming a first resonate structure-waveguide interface, whereby optical signal propagation of an evanescent wave from the input waveguide to the first resonate structure can occur;

a second WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for a second group of resonate signals, one of which is also a resonate signal of the first resonate structure, fixed proximate to the first resonate structure forming a direct optical-switch interface, whereby optical signal propagation from the first WGM resonate structure to the second WGM resonate structure can occur; and

a second resonate structure-waveguide interface formed between the second WGM resonate structure and the output waveguide, whereby optical signal propagation from the second WGM resonate structure to the output waveguide can occur.

281. The optical filter of claim 280 wherein each WGM resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, discs and microspheres.

282. The optical filter of claim 280 wherein at least one of the first and second WGM resonate structures is a microsphere.

283. The optical filter of claim 280 wherein the input and output waveguides are each an optical fiber with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

284. The optical filter of claim 280 further comprising:

a triggerable signal absorbing material within at least one of the WGM resonate structures; and

a trigger means for activating the signal absorbing material within at least one WGM resonate structure.

285. The optical filter of claim 284 wherein the trigger means is an intense beam of light directed at the resonate structure.

286. The optical filter of claim 285 wherein the intense beam of light is a laser beam.

287. The optical filter of claim 286 further comprising a Mach-Zender interferometer to produce the laser beam.

288. The optical filter of claim 280 further comprising a switching means for adjusting the index of refraction of at least one of the WGM resonate structures at one or more of the resonate structure waveguide interfaces.

289. The optical filter of claim 288 wherein the switching means is a pair of electrodes, each with a conductive contact lead, placed on either side of at least one of the WGM resonate structures.

290. The optical filter of claim 288 wherein the switching means is a laser beam directed at one or more of the WGM resonate structures.

291. The optical filter of claim 290 further comprising a Mach-Zender interferometer to produce the laser beam.

292. The optical filter of claim 289 further comprising a medium surrounding at least one of the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces and the direct optical-switch interface

which is adjacent to a WGM resonate structure which has a pair of electrodes placed on either side.

293. The optical filter of claim 290 further comprising a medium surrounding at least one of the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces and the direct optical-switch interface which is adjacent to a resonate structure which has a laser beam directed at it.

294. The optical filter of claim 283 wherein at least one of the optical fibers is tapered.

295. The optical filter of claim 283 wherein at least one of the input and output waveguides is selected from the group consisting of a semi-conductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide, or a photonic crystal waveguide.

296. An optical filter comprising:

an intermediary waveguide;

a first subfilter for a first group of resonate signals fixed proximate to an input waveguide and the intermediary waveguide; and

a second subfilter for a second specific group of resonate signals, one of which is also a resonate signal of the first optical switch, fixed proximate to the intermediary waveguide and an output waveguide.

297. An optical filter comprising:

an intermediary waveguide;

a first subfilter, which can switch a first group of resonate signals, fixed proximate to an input waveguide and the intermediary waveguide;

a second subfilter, which can switch a second group of resonate signals, one of which is also a resonate signal of the first group of resonate signals, fixed proximate to the intermediary waveguide and an output waveguide; and

an "on/off" switching means for controlling at least one of the subfilters.

298. An optical filter comprising:

an input waveguide;

an output waveguide;

an intermediary waveguide;

a first WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for a first group of resonate signals fixed proximate to the input waveguide forming a first resonate structure-waveguide interface which supports optical signal propagation from the input waveguide to the first dielectric WGM resonate structure;

a second WGM resonate structure-waveguide interface formed between the first WGM resonate structure and the intermediary waveguide which supports optical signal propagation from the first WGM resonate structure to the intermediary waveguide;

a second resonate structure which resonates in WGM for a second group of resonate signals, one of which is also a resonate signal of the first WGM resonate structure, fixed proximate to the intermediary waveguide forming a third resonate structure-waveguide interface which supports signal propagation from the intermediary waveguide to the second WGM resonate structure; and

a fourth resonate structure-waveguide interface formed between the second WGM resonate structure and the output waveguide which supports signal propagation from the second WGM resonate structure to the output waveguide.

299. The optical filter of claim 298 wherein the WGM resonate structures are each selected from the group consisting of stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, discs and microspheres.

300. The optical filter of claim 298 wherein at least one of the first and second WGM resonate structures are microspheres.

301. The optical filter of claim 298 wherein the input and output waveguides are each an optical fiber with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

302. The optical filter of claim 298 wherein the intermediary waveguide is an optical fiber with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

303. The optical filter of claim 298 wherein the input, intermediary and output waveguides are optical fibers each with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

304. The optical filter of claim 298 wherein at least one of the input, output and intermediary optical fibers are tapered.

305. The optical filter of claim 298 wherein at least one of the input, output and intermediary waveguides is selected from the group consisting of a semi-conductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide, or a photonic crystal waveguide.

306. The optical filter of claim 298 further comprising a switching means for adjusting the index of refraction of at least one of the WGM resonate structures at one or more of the resonate structure waveguide interfaces.

307. The optical filter of claim 306 wherein the switching means is a pair of electrodes, each with a conductive contact lead, placed on either side of at least one of the WGM resonate structures.

308. The optical filter of claim 304 wherein the switching means is a laser beam directed at, at least one of the WGM resonate structures.

309. The optical filter of claim 308 further comprising a Mach-Zender interferometer to produce the laser beam.

310. The optical filter of claim 307 further comprising a medium surrounding at least one of the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces which is adjacent to each WGM resonate structure which has a pair of electrodes placed on either side.

311. The optical filter of claim 308 further comprising a medium surrounding at least one of the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces which is adjacent to each WGM resonate structure which has a laser beam directed at it.

312. An optical filter comprising:

a first resonate structure which can resonate in WGM for a first group of resonate signals; and

a second resonate structure, fixed proximate to the first resonate structure which can resonate in WGM for a second group of resonate signals one of which is also a resonate signal of the first WGM resonate structure.

313. An optical filter comprising:

a first WGM resonate structure which can resonate in WGM for a first group of resonate signals;

a second WGM resonate structure, fixed proximate to the first resonate structure which can resonate in WGM for a second group of resonate signals one of which is also a resonate signal of the first resonate structure; and

at least one additional resonate structure fixed proximate to the second resonate structure each of which can resonate in WGM for an additional group of resonate signals, one of which is the same resonate signal common to both the first and second resonate structures.

314. The optical filter of claim 312 wherein:

the first resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, discs and microspheres; and

the second resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, discs, microspheres, and resonate cavities.

315. A system to demultiplex different wavelength optical signals comprising:

at least two optical filters, each of which can filter for a different, wavelength optical signal;

an input waveguide fixed at a region proximate to all optical filters, whereby an optical signal can propagate from the input waveguide to the optical filters; and

a separate output waveguide, fixed at a region proximate to each optical filter, whereby optical signals can propagate from an optical filter to the proximate output waveguide.

316. The system of claim 315 further comprising:

at least two tertiary waveguides; and

an optical switch between each output waveguide and each tertiary waveguide, whereby optical signals can propagate from the optical switch to the tertiary waveguide.

317. The system of claim 316 further comprising an "on/off" switching means which can be applied to at least one of the optical switches.

318. The system of claim 316 wherein each optical switch comprises a resonate structure which is fixed proximate to the output waveguide and the tertiary waveguide.

319. The system of claim 316 wherein each optical switch comprises a wavelength specific resonate structure which is fixed at a region proximate to the output waveguide and the tertiary waveguide.

320. The system of claim 318 wherein the resonate structures are selected from the group consisting of stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, discs, microspheres, or resonate cavities.

321. The system of claim 318 further comprising an electronic switching means to adjust the index of refraction of the resonate structure within at least one optical switch.

322. The system of claim 321 wherein the electronic switching means comprises:

a pair of electrodes, each with a conductive lead, placed on either side of the at least one resonant structure, whereby electrical power can pass across the resonate structure; and

a controller attached to the conductive leads, whereby the flow of electricity to the conductive leads can be selected.

323. The system of claim 318 further comprising an optical switching means for adjusting the index of refraction of the resonate structure within at least one optical switch.

324. The system of claim 323 wherein the optical switching means is a laser beam directed at the resonate structure within the at least one optical switch.

325. The system of claim 318 further comprising:

a triggerable signal absorbing material within at least one resonate structures; and

a trigger means for activating the signal absorbing material within the at least one resonate structure.

326. The system of claim 316 further comprising:

an electronic switching means which can be applied to at least one of the optical switches; and

an optical switching means which can be applied to at least one of the optical switches.

327. The system of claim 317 further comprising a medium with a known index of refraction surrounding at least one of the regions where at least one optical switch is fixed proximate to a tertiary or output waveguide.

328. The system of claim 327 wherein the medium is selected from the group consisting of air, plastic, or water.

329. A system to demultiplex different wavelength optical signals comprising:

“n” gate keeper subfilters;

an input waveguide fixed at a region proximate to all the “n” gate keeper subfilters;

“n” intermediary waveguides, each fixed proximate to one of the “n” gate keeper subfilters;

“n” groups of “m” isolator subfilters, each group of “m” isolator subfilters filter for the same resonate signals, fixed at a region proximate to each intermediary waveguide; and

“m” output waveguides each fixed at a region proximate to one of the “m” isolator subfilters from each of the “n” groups of isolator subfilters.

330. The system of claim 329 further comprising an “on/off” control means which can be applied to at least one of the subfilters.

331. The system of claim 330 wherein each subfilter contains a WGM resonate structure.

332. The system of claim 331 wherein the “on/off” control means is an electronic WGM control comprising:

a pair of electrodes, each with a conductive lead, placed on either side of the WGM resonate structure of the at least one subfilter, whereby electrical power can pass across the WGM resonate structure; and

a controller attached to the conductive leads, whereby the flow of electricity to the conductive leads can be selected.

333. The system of claim 331 wherein the “on/off” control means is an optical WGM control, comprising a laser beam directed at the WGM resonate structure within the at least one subfilter.

334. The system of claim 333 further comprising at least one Mach-Zender interferometer to produce each laser beam.

335. The system of claim 331 wherein the “on/off” control means is through signal loss control.

336. The system of claim 335 wherein the signal loss control comprises:

a triggerable signal absorbing material within at least one WGM resonate structure; and

a trigger means for activating the signal absorbing material within the WGM resonate structure.

337. The system of claim 331 further comprising:

WGM control means which can be applied to at least one of the subfilters; and

a signal loss control means which can be applied to at least one of the subfilters.

338. The system of claim 332 further comprising a medium with a known index of refraction surrounding at least one of the regions where at least one WGM resonate structure is fixed proximate to an input, intermediary or output waveguide.

339. The system of claim 333 further comprising a medium with a known index of refraction surrounding at least one of the regions where at least one WGM resonate structure is fixed proximate to an input, intermediary or output waveguide.

340. A method of optical filtering comprising:

providing optical signals of at least two different wavelengths to a first subfilter;

coupling the signals which are resonate signals of the first subfilter to the first subfilter;

coupling a single resonate signal from the first subfilter to a second subfilter; and

coupling the single resonate signal to a secondary structure.

341. A method of optical filtering comprising:

providing a plurality of optical signals to a first subfilter;

coupling the resonate signals which are resonate signals of the first subfilter to the first subfilter;

coupling a single resonate signal from the first subfilter to a second subfilter; and

coupling the single resonate signal to an output waveguide.

342. The method of claim 341 wherein the resonate signal is provided to the second subfilter by direct coupling with the first subfilter.

343. The method of claim 341 wherein the resonate signal is provided to the second subfilter by indirect coupling with the first subfilter.

344. The method of claim 343 the method further comprising:

coupling the resonate signals from the first subfilter to an intermediary waveguide; and

coupling a resonate signal from the intermediary waveguide to the second subfilter.

345. The method of claim 340 the method further comprising applying a WGM control to switch “on/off” at least one subfilter.

346. The method of claim 340 the method further comprising applying a signal loss control to switch “on/off” at least one subfilter.

347. The method of claim 341 the method further comprising applying a WGM control to switch “on/off” at least one subfilter.

348. The method of claim 341 the method further comprising applying a signal loss control to switch “on/off” at least one subfilter.

349. A method of optical filtering comprising:

providing optical signals of at least two different wavelengths to a first WGM resonate structure;

coupling the optical signals which the first WGM resonate structure resonates for to the first WGM resonate structure;

coupling a single resonate signal from the first WGM resonate structure to a second WGM resonate structure; and

coupling the single resonate signal from the second WGM resonate structure to a waveguide.

350. The method of claim 349 wherein at least one of the WGM resonate structures is a microsphere.

351. The method of claim 349 the method further comprising providing the optical signals within a waveguide.

352. The method of claim 349 wherein the optical signals are within a channel within an optical telecommunications band.

353. The method of claim 349 the method further comprising applying a WGM control to switch “on/off” the WGM resonance of at least one of the WGM resonate structures.

354. The method of claim 353 wherein the WGM control is to adjust the index of refraction of a WGM resonate structure to substantially match the index of refraction of a medium surrounding at least the portion of the WGM resonate structure where coupling occurs.

355. The method of claim 353 wherein the WGM control is to adjust the index of refraction of a WGM resonate structure to not substantially match the index of refraction of a medium surrounding the portions of the WGM resonate structure where coupling occurs.

356. The method of claim 349 the method further comprising applying a signal loss control to switch “on/off” the WGM resonance of at least one of the WGM resonate structures.

357. A method of optical filtering comprising:

providing optical signals of at least two different wavelengths to a first WGM resonate structure;

coupling the optical signals which the first WGM resonate structure resonates for to the first WGM resonate structure;

coupling the optical signals from the first WGM resonate structure to an intermediary waveguide; and

coupling a single optical signal from the intermediary waveguide to a second WGM resonate structure.

358. The method of claim 357 the method further comprising coupling the single optical signal to an output waveguide.

359. The method of claim 357 wherein at least one of the WGM resonate structures is a microsphere.

360. The method of claim 357 the method further comprising providing the optical signals within a waveguide.

361. The method of claim 357 wherein the optical signals are within a channel within an optical telecommunications band.

362. The method of claim 357 the method further comprising applying a WGM control to switch “on/off” the WGM resonance of at least one of the WGM resonate structures.

363. The method of claim 362 wherein the WGM control is to adjust the index of refraction of at least one WGM resonate structure relative to the index of refraction of a medium surrounding at least one region where signal coupling to or from the at least one WGM resonate structure occurs.

364. The method of claim 359 the method further comprising applying a signal loss control to the WGM resonate structure, whereby the WGM resonance of the WGM resonate structure is disrupted by signal loss.

365. A method to demultiplex different wavelength optical signals comprising:

providing optical signals of at least two different wavelengths within an input waveguide, to at least two wavelength specific optical filters each of which selects for a group of resonate signals;

coupling optical signals, which are the resonate signals for a WGM resonate structure, from the input waveguide to the corresponding optical filter; and

providing as output from each optical filter a signal of a specific wavelength.

366. The method of claim 365 the method further comprising coupling each specific wavelength output signal to a separate output waveguide.

367. A method to demultiplex different wavelength optical signals comprising:

providing optical signals of at least two different wavelengths within an input waveguide, to at least two wavelength specific optical filters each of which selects for a group of resonate signals;

coupling optical signals, which are the resonate signals for a WGM resonate structure, from the input waveguide to the corresponding optical filter;

providing as output from each optical filter a signal of a specific wavelength;

coupling each specific wavelength output signal to a separate output waveguide;

coupling the specific wavelength output signal from each output waveguide to “m” optical switches; and

providing as output from each optical switch the specific wavelength output signal.

368. The method of claim 367 wherein each optical switch contains a WGM resonate structure.

369. The method of claim 367 the method further comprising switching the specific wavelength output signal from at least one optical switch to at least one tertiary waveguide.

370. The method of claim 368 the method further comprising applying a WGM control to at least one optical switch.

371. The method of claim 370 wherein the WGM control is to adjust the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure within the optical switch.

372. The method of claim 370 wherein the WGM control is applied electronically by passing a flow of electricity across the WGM resonate structure within the optical switch.

373. The method of claim 370 wherein the WGM control is applied optically by directing an intense beam of light at the WGM resonate structure within the optical switch.

374. An optical filter comprising:

an input waveguide;

an intermediary waveguide;

an output waveguide;

a first subfilter for a first group of resonate signals fixed proximate to the input waveguide and the intermediary waveguide; and

a second subfilter for a second specific group of resonate signals, one of which is also a resonate signal of the first optical switch, fixed proximate to the intermediary waveguide and the output waveguide.

375. An optical filter comprising:

an input waveguide;

an intermediary waveguide;

an output waveguide;

a first subfilter, which can switch a first group of resonate signals, fixed proximate to the input waveguide and the intermediary waveguide;

a second subfilter, which can switch a second group of resonate signals, one of which is also a resonate signal of the first group of resonate signals, fixed proximate to the intermediary waveguide and the output waveguide; and

an "on/off" switching means for controlling at least one of the subfilters.

376. An optical filter comprising:

an input waveguide;

a secondary structure which supports signal propagation;

a WGM resonate structure fixed at a region proximate to the input waveguide and the secondary structure;

a resonate structure-waveguide interface formed at each of the proximate regions,

a medium surrounding at least a portion of the WGM resonate structure at one of the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces; and

an "on/off" means for adjusting the index of refraction of at least that portion of the WGM resonate structure surrounded by medium.

377. The optical filter of claim 376 wherein the WGM resonate structure is a microsphere.

378. The optical filter of claim 377 wherein the diameter of the microsphere is between about 10 and 500 microns.

379. The optical filter of claim 377 wherein the diameter of the microsphere is between about 10 and about 250 microns.

380. The optical filter of claim 377 wherein the diameter of the microsphere is between about 10 and 200 microns.

381. The optical filter of claim 376 wherein the medium is selected from the group consisting of water, plastic, or air.

382. The optical filter of claim 376 wherein the WGM resonate structure is selected from the group consisting of stadiums, rings, hoops, oblate and prolate spheroids, discs or microspheres.

383. The optical filter of claim 376 wherein the secondary structure is selected from the group consisting of a waveguide, an optical fiber, a tapered optical fiber, a semiconductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide, a photonic crystal waveguide or a WGM resonate structure.

384. The optical filter of claim 376 wherein the "on/off" means is electrical, comprising a pair of electrodes each with a conductive lead, placed on either side of the microsphere.

385. The optical filter of claim 376 wherein the "on/off" means is optical, comprising an intense beam of light directed at the WGM resonate structure.

386. The optical filter of claim 385 wherein the intense beam of light is a laser beam.

387. The optical filter of claim 386 further comprising a Mach-Zender interferometer to generate the laser beam.

388. The optical filter of claim 377 further comprising an optically active material coating the microsphere whereby the index of refraction of the optically active material is the index of refraction of the resonate structure for purposes of adjusting the index of refraction of the resonate structure.

389. The optical filter of claim 388 wherein the optically active material is selected from the group consisting of molecules of liquid crystal, organic photorefractive polymers, GaAs, Nitrobenzene and LiNbO₃.

390. An optical filter comprising:

an optical fiber;

an area of reduced cladding on the optical fiber;

a secondary structure which supports signal propagation;

a WGM microsphere fixed at a region proximate to the area of reduced cladding and to the secondary structure;

a resonate structure-waveguide interface formed at each proximate region;

a medium, with a known index of refraction, surrounding at least a portion of the WGM microsphere at one or more of the resonate structure-waveguide interfaces;

a pair of electrodes each with a conductive contact lead, placed on either side of the WGM microsphere; and

a controller attached to the conductive leads whereby the flow of electricity to the conductive leads can be selected.

391. A system to demultiplex optical signals:

"n" groups of optical filters, each of which contains a WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for a different group of resonate signals;

an input waveguide fixed at a region proximate to each of the "n" optical filters, whereby optical signals can propagate from the input waveguide to the optical filter;

“n” output waveguides each fixed at a region proximate to one of the “n” optical filters, whereby optical signals can propagate from an optical filter to an output waveguide;

a medium partially surrounding at least one of the WGM resonate structures at a proximate region; and

an “on/off” means for adjusting the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure applied to at least one of the WGM resonate structures partially surrounded by medium, whereby the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure at a proximate region can be adjusted to be substantially equal to the index of refraction of the medium.

392. The system of claim 391 further comprising a resonate structure-waveguide interface formed at each of the proximate regions.

393. The system of claim 391 wherein the “on/off” means to adjust the index of refraction is electrical.

394. The system of claim 393 the electrical “on/off” means for this comprising:

a pair of electrodes each with a conductive lead, placed on either side of the at least one WGM at resonant structure, whereby electrical power can pass across the resonate structure; and

a controller attached to the conductive leads, whereby the flow of electricity to the conductive leads can be selected.

395. The system of claim 391 wherein the “on/off” means to adjust the index of refraction is optical.

396. The system of claim 395, the optical “on/off” means further comprising a laser beam directed at the at least one WGM resonate structure.

397. The system of claim 396 further comprising at least one Mach-Zender interferometer to produce each laser beam.

398. The system of claim 391 wherein the medium is selected from the group consisting of water, plastic, or air.

399. The system of claim 391 wherein at least one of the resonate structures is a microsphere.

400. The system of claim 392 wherein at least one of the input and output waveguides is an optical fiber with an area of reduced cladding at each resonate structure-waveguide interface.

401. The system of claim 400 wherein each optical fiber is tapered at the area of reduced cladding.

402. The system of claim 391 wherein each of the input and output waveguides is selected from the group consisting of an optical fiber, a tapered optical fiber, a semi-conductor waveguide, a photonic band gap waveguide or a photonic crystal waveguide.

403. A system to demultiplex and multiplex optical signals comprising:

“n” groups of “m” redundant optical filters, each of the “m” redundant optical filters in each of the “n” groups contains a WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for the same group of resonate signals;

an input waveguide fixed at a region proximate to each optical filter, whereby optical signals can propagate from the input waveguide to the optical filter;

a medium partially surrounding at least one WGM resonate structure at a proximate region;

an “on/off” means which can be applied to at least one of the WGM resonate structures partially surrounded by medium, whereby the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure at a proximate region can be adjusted to be substantially equal to the index of refraction of the medium; and

“m” output waveguides each fixed at a region proximate to one of the “m” optical filters in each of the “n” groups.

404. A method of switching “on/off” an optical filter comprising:

coupling optical signals, which are the resonate signals of a WGM resonate structure that is at least partially surrounded by a medium at one or more region where signal coupling can occur;

coupling the optical signal from the WGM resonate structure to a secondary structure which supports signal propagation; and

selectively applying a WGM control to the WGM resonate structure whereby the filter is switched “off” by adjusting the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure to substantially equal the index of refraction of the medium at one or more of the regions where signal coupling occurs.

405. The method of claim 404 wherein the WGM control is polarization of at least a portion of the resonate structure.

406. The method of claim 405 wherein the polarization is caused by passing electrical power across the resonate structure.

407. The method of claim 405 wherein the polarization is produced by directing an intense beam of light at the resonate structure.

408. The method of claim 404 the method further comprising supplying the optical signals within a waveguide.

409. The method of claim 408 wherein the optical signals are within an optical telecommunications band.

410. The method of claim 390 wherein the secondary structure is an output waveguide.

411. The method of claim 399 the method further comprising adding the optical signals to the output waveguide.

412. A method to demultiplex optical signals:

providing optical signals of at least two different wavelengths within a single input waveguide to at least two optical filters each containing a WGM resonate structure, at least one of which is at least partially surrounded by a medium at one or more regions where signal coupling can occur;

coupling optical signals, which are the resonate signals for a WGM resonate structure, from the input waveguide to the corresponding optical filter;

selectively adjusting the index of refraction of at least one of the WGM resonate structures partially surrounded by medium, whereby the optical filter is switched “off” by adjusting the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure to substantially equal the index of refraction of the medium at one or more of the regions where signal coupling occurs; and

providing as output signals, from each optical filter in which WGM resonance has not been switched “off”, the optical signals corresponding to the wavelengths of its resonate signals.

413. The method of claim 412 the method further comprising providing each of the output signals of each optical filter to a separate output waveguide.

414. A method to demultiplex optical signals:

providing “n” optical signals of different wavelengths within a single input waveguide to “n” groups of “m” redundant optical filters, each of the “m” redundant optical filters in each of the “n” groups contains a WGM resonate structure which resonates in WGM for the same resonant signals and at least one of the WGM resonate structures is at least partially surrounded by a medium at one or more region where signal coupling can occur;

coupling optical signals, which are the resonate signals for a WOM resonate structure, from the input waveguide to the corresponding optical filter;

selectively adjusting the index of refraction of at least one of the WGM resonate structures partially surrounded by medium, whereby the optical filter is switched “off” by adjusting the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure to substantially equal the index of refraction of the medium at one or more of the regions where signal coupling occurs; and

providing as output signals, from each of the “m” optical filters in which WGM resonance has not been switched “off”, the optical signals corresponding to the wavelengths of its resonate signals.

415. The method of claim 412 the method further comprising multiplexing the output signals by providing “m” output waveguides, each waveguide being fixed proximate to one of the “m” optical filters in each of the “n” groups, whereby output signals from each of the “n” groups of optical filters may be coupled to one of the “m” output waveguides.

416. An optical filter comprising:

a WGM resonate structure with a first proximate region to couple to one or more input signals;

a second proximate region of the WGM resonate structure to provide one or more output signals;

a medium surrounding at least one of the first and second proximate regions; and

an “on/off” control means for adjusting the index of refraction of the WGM resonate structure at one or more of the first and second proximate regions.

417. The optical filter according to claim 147, wherein said “on/off” switching means comprises:

a binding agent on said WGM resonate structure; and

an analyte in a sample which is exposed to said binding agent;

wherein when said analyte binds with said binding agent on said WGM resonate structure, one of a change in frequency, attenuation and destruction of an optical signal is detected which triggers said “on/off” switching means.

418. The optical filter according to claim 417, wherein said binding agent and said analyte are provided in pairs, and said binding agent/analyte pairs include: antigen/antibody, antibody/antigen, ligand/receptor, receptor/ligand, nucleic acid/nucleic acid.

419. The optical filter according to claim 417, wherein said binding agent and said analyte include complexing agents, chelating agents, and chemical bonding agents.

420. The optical filter according to claim 147, wherein said “on/off” switching means comprises:

a binding agent bound to an analyte on said WGM resonate structure; and

a sample which is exposed to said WGM resonate structure;

wherein said analyte is competed away from being bound to said binding agent when exposed to said sample, resulting in detection of said analyte by one of a change in frequency, attenuation and destruction of an optical signal, which triggers said “on/off” switching means.

421. The optical filter according to claim 420, wherein said binding agent and said analyte are provided in pairs, and said binding agent/analyte pairs include: antigen/antibody, antibody/antigen, ligand/receptor, receptor/ligand, nucleic acid/nucleic acid.

422. The optical filter according to claim 420, wherein said binding agent and said analyte include complexing agents, chelating agents, and chemical bonding agents.

423. A method of switching “on/off” an optical filter, comprising:

coupling an optical signal to a WGM resonate structure having a binding agent thereon;

coupling the optical signal from said WGM resonate structure to a secondary structure which supports signal propagation; and

detecting a presence of an analyte by one of a change in frequency, attenuation, and destruction of said optical signal to trigger switching of said “on/off” optical filter.

424. The method according to claim 423, wherein said detection of said analyte results when a binding agent on said WGM resonate structure is exposed to said analyte.

425. The method according to claim 423, wherein said detection of said analyte results when a sample is exposed to said WGM resonate structure, and said analyte is competed away from being bound to a binding agent on said WGM resonate structure.

426. The method according to claim 424, wherein said binding agent and said analyte are provided in pairs, and said binding agent/analyte pairs include: antigen/antibody, antibody/antigen, ligand/receptor, receptor/ligand, nucleic acid/nucleic acid.

426. The method according to claim 424, wherein said binding agent and said analyte include complexing agents, chelating agents, and chemical bonding agents.

427. The method according to claim 425, wherein said binding agent and said analyte are provided in pairs, and said binding agent/analyte pairs include: antigen/antibody, antibody/antigen, ligand/receptor, receptor/ligand, nucleic acid/nucleic acid.

428. The method according to claim 425, wherein said binding agent and said analyte include complexing agents, chelating agents, and chemical bonding agents.