



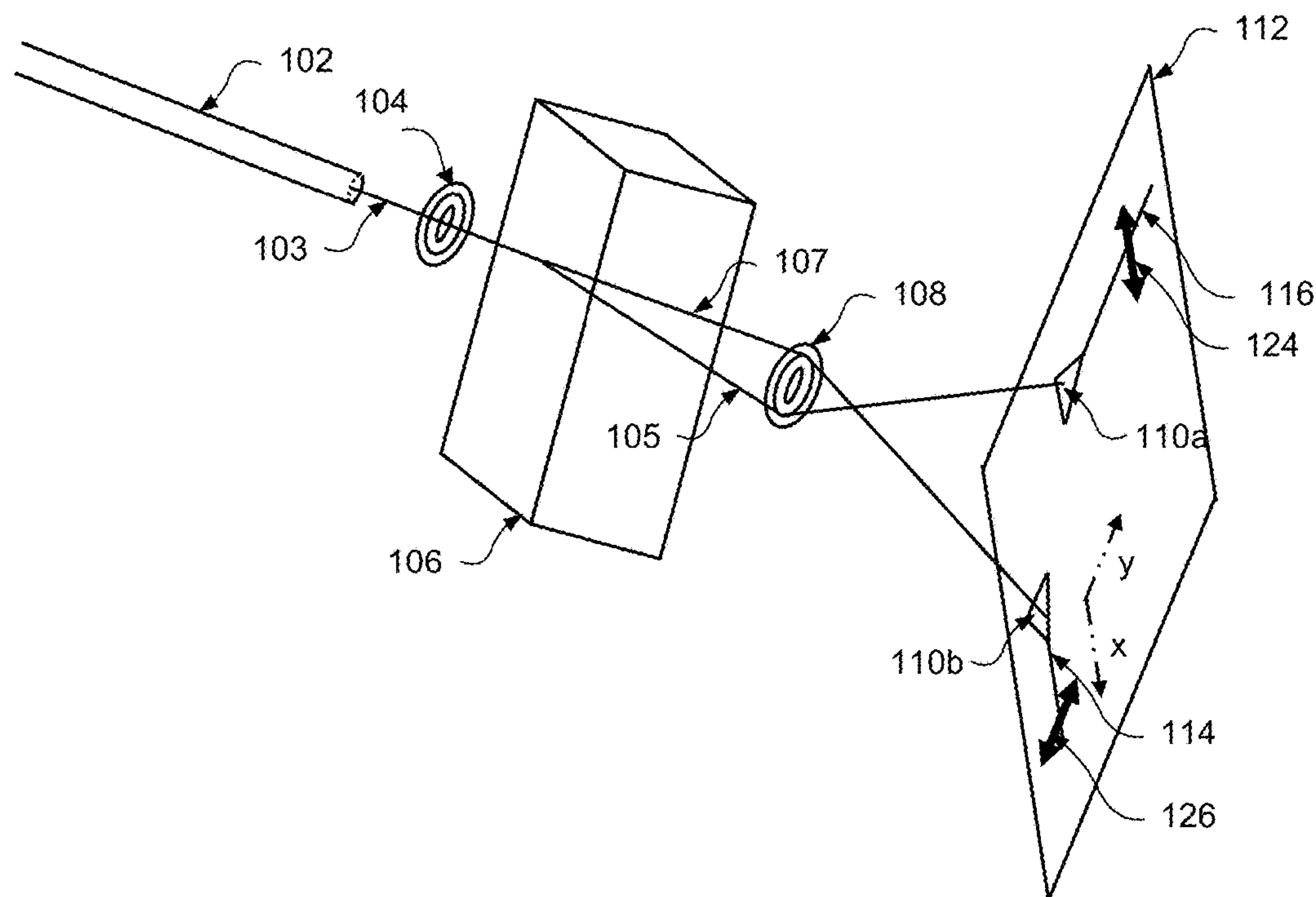
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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**  
**GOODWILL et al.**(10) **Pub. No.: US 2018/0180815 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Jun. 28, 2018**(54) **OPTICAL COUPLING USING  
POLARIZATION BEAM DISPLACER**(71) Applicants: **Dominic John GOODWILL**, Ottawa  
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(57)

**ABSTRACT**

An optical coupling apparatus for coupling an optical fiber to a photonic chip is described. The apparatus includes a collimating microlens for collimating light from the optical fiber; a polarization splitting beam displacer for separating the light collimated by the collimating microlens into orthogonally polarized X and Y component beams; at least one focusing microlens for directing the X and Y component beams separately onto the photonic chip; and first and second surface grating couplers (SGCs) orthogonally disposed on the photonic chip and configured for operation in a same polarization state, for coupling the X and Y component beams, respectively, to the photonic chip.

100

100

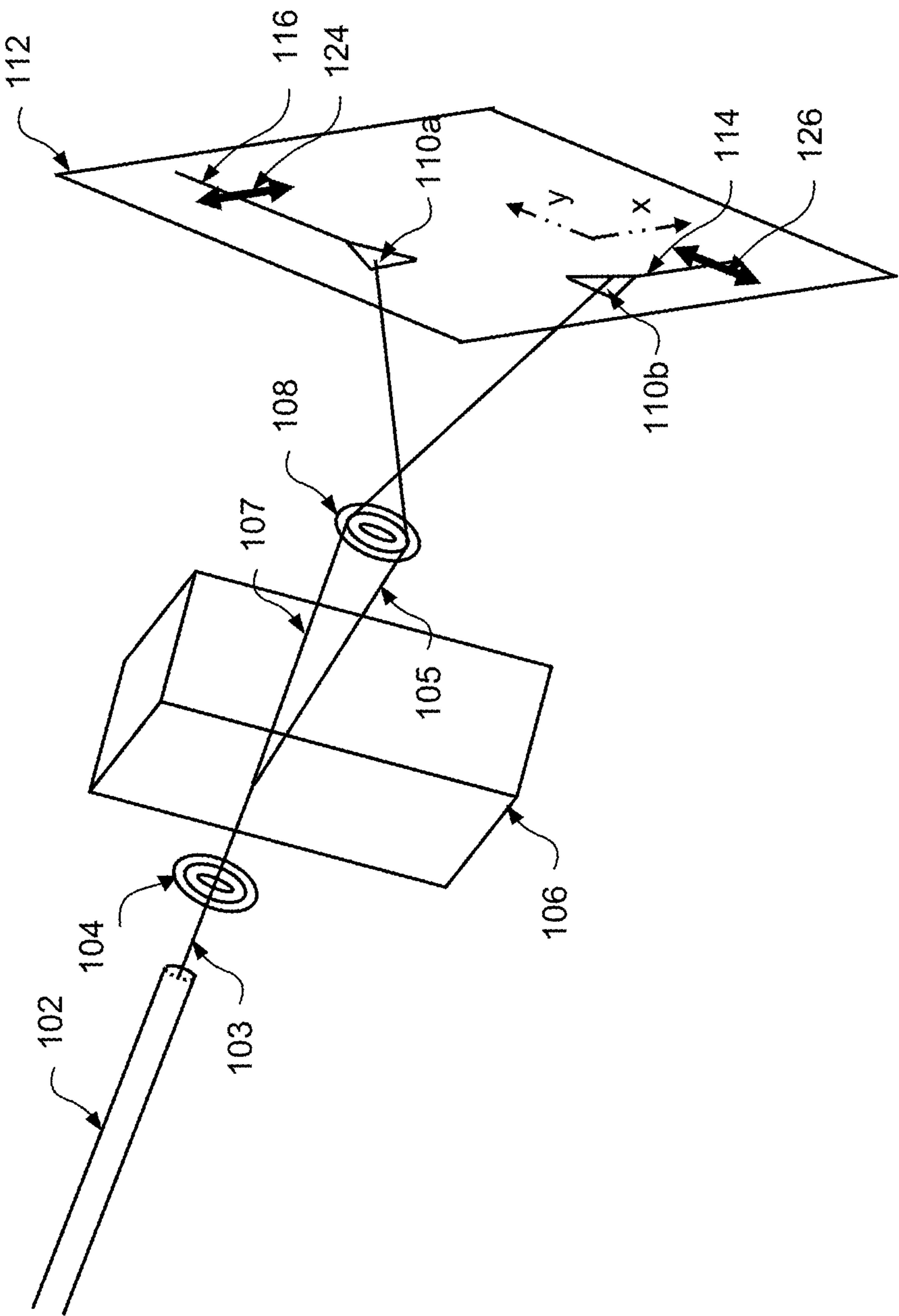
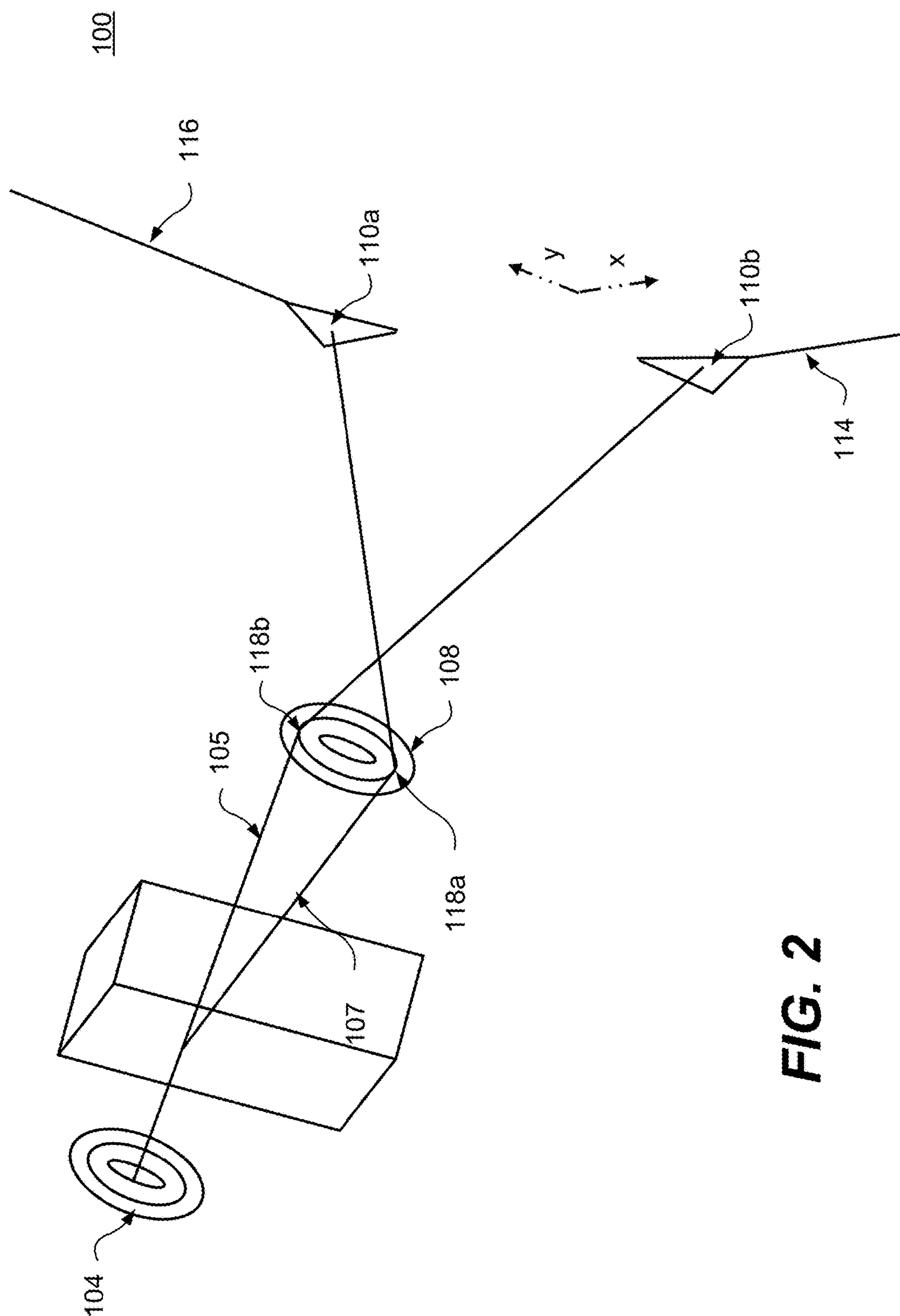


FIG. 1



**FIG. 2**

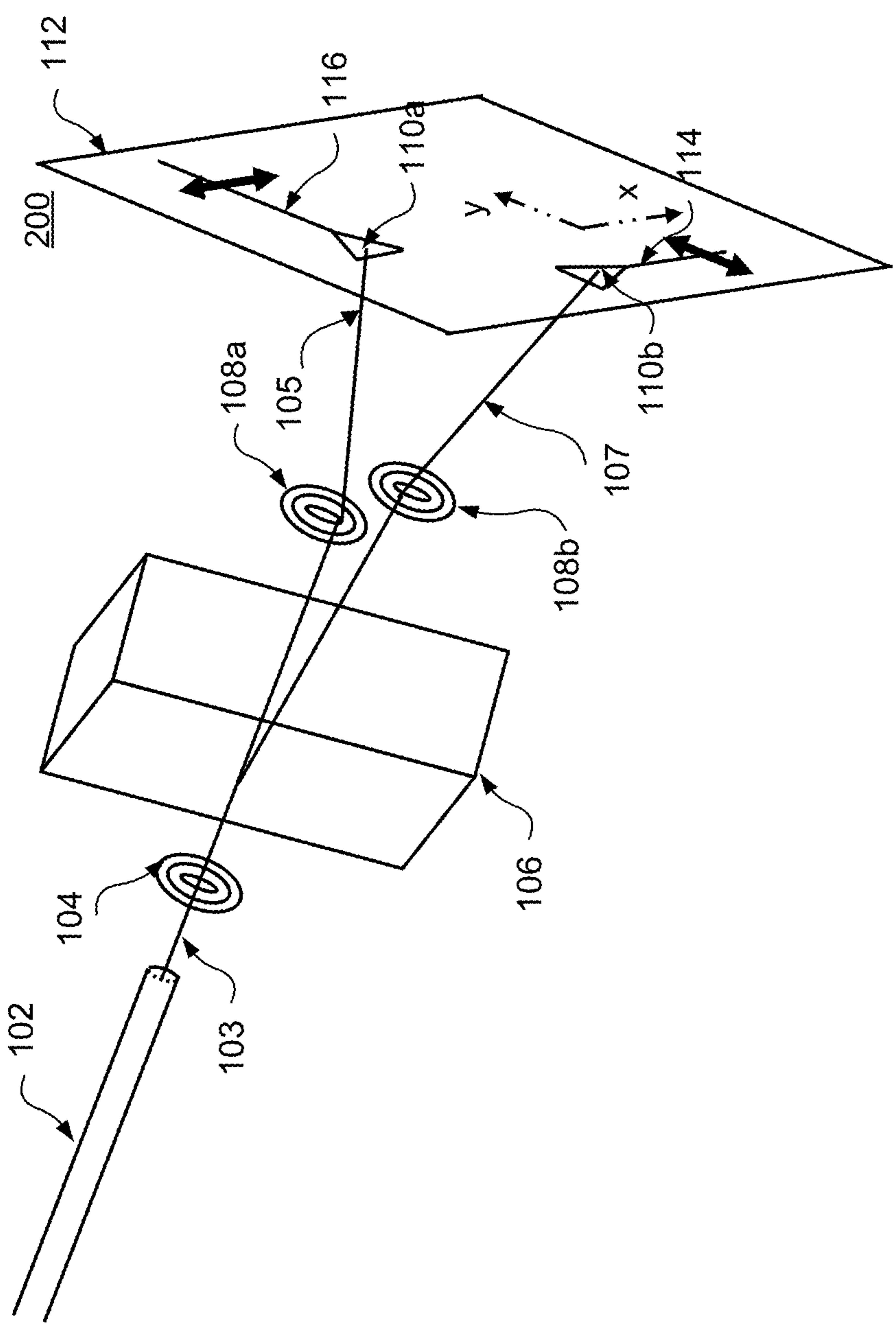
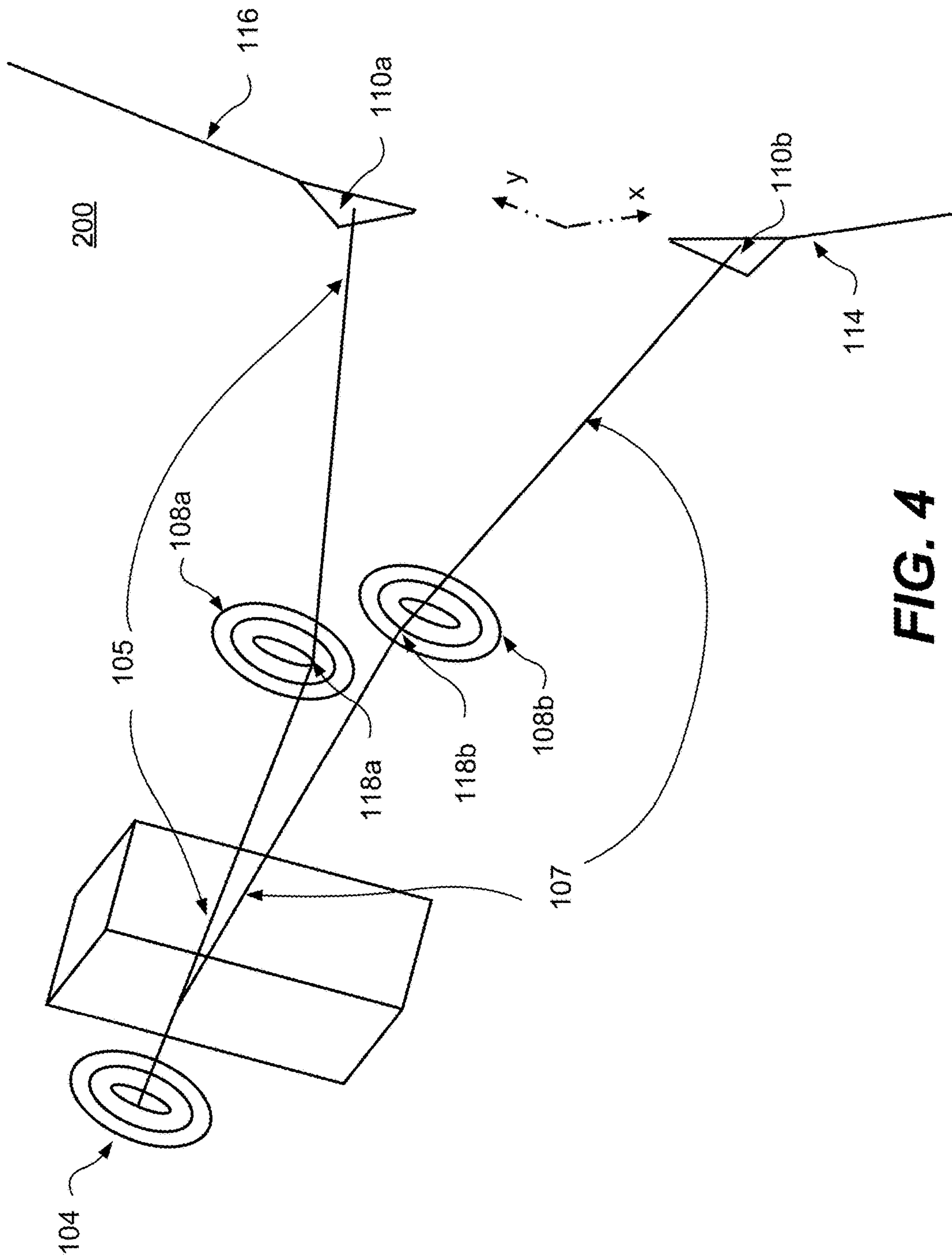
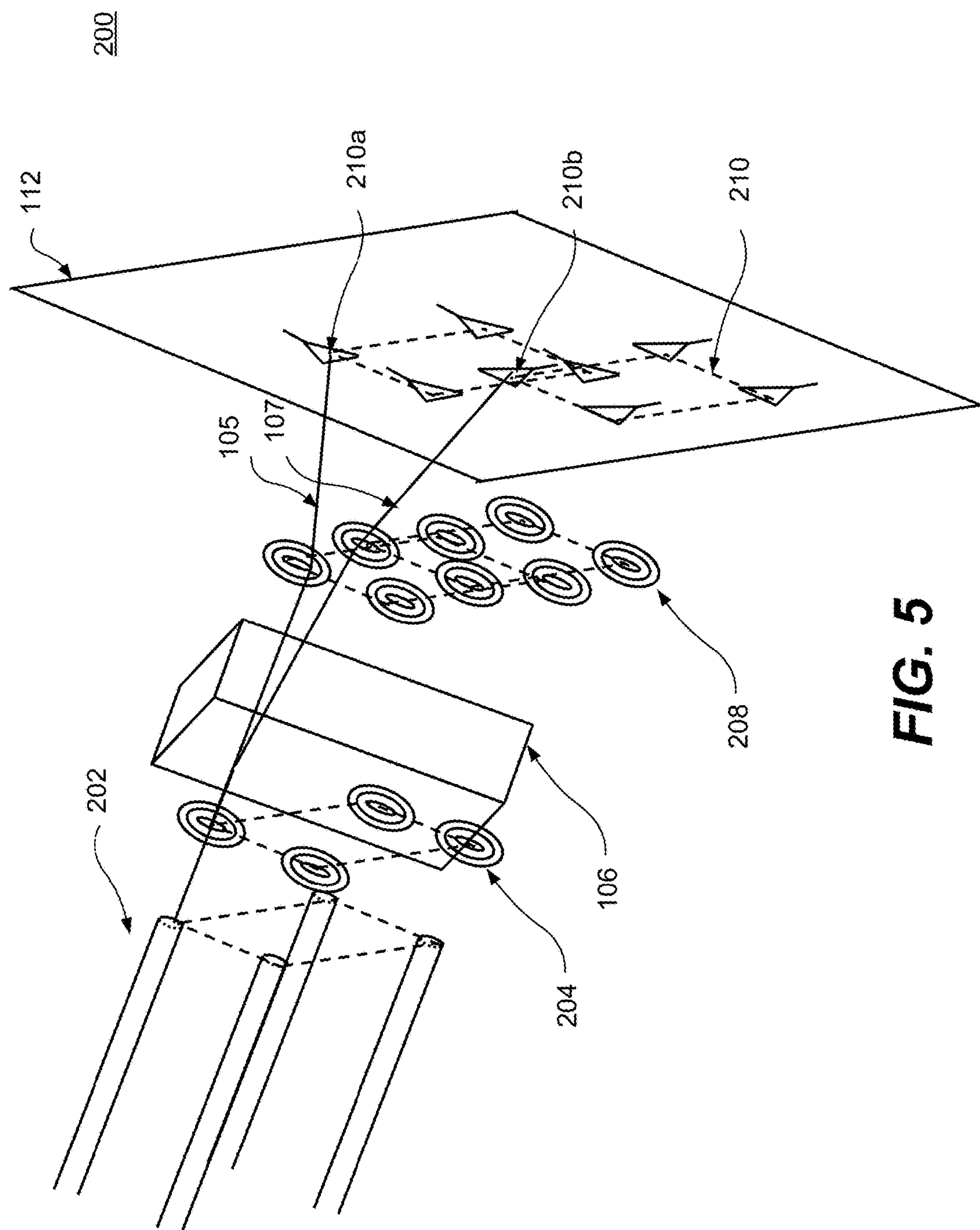


FIG. 3

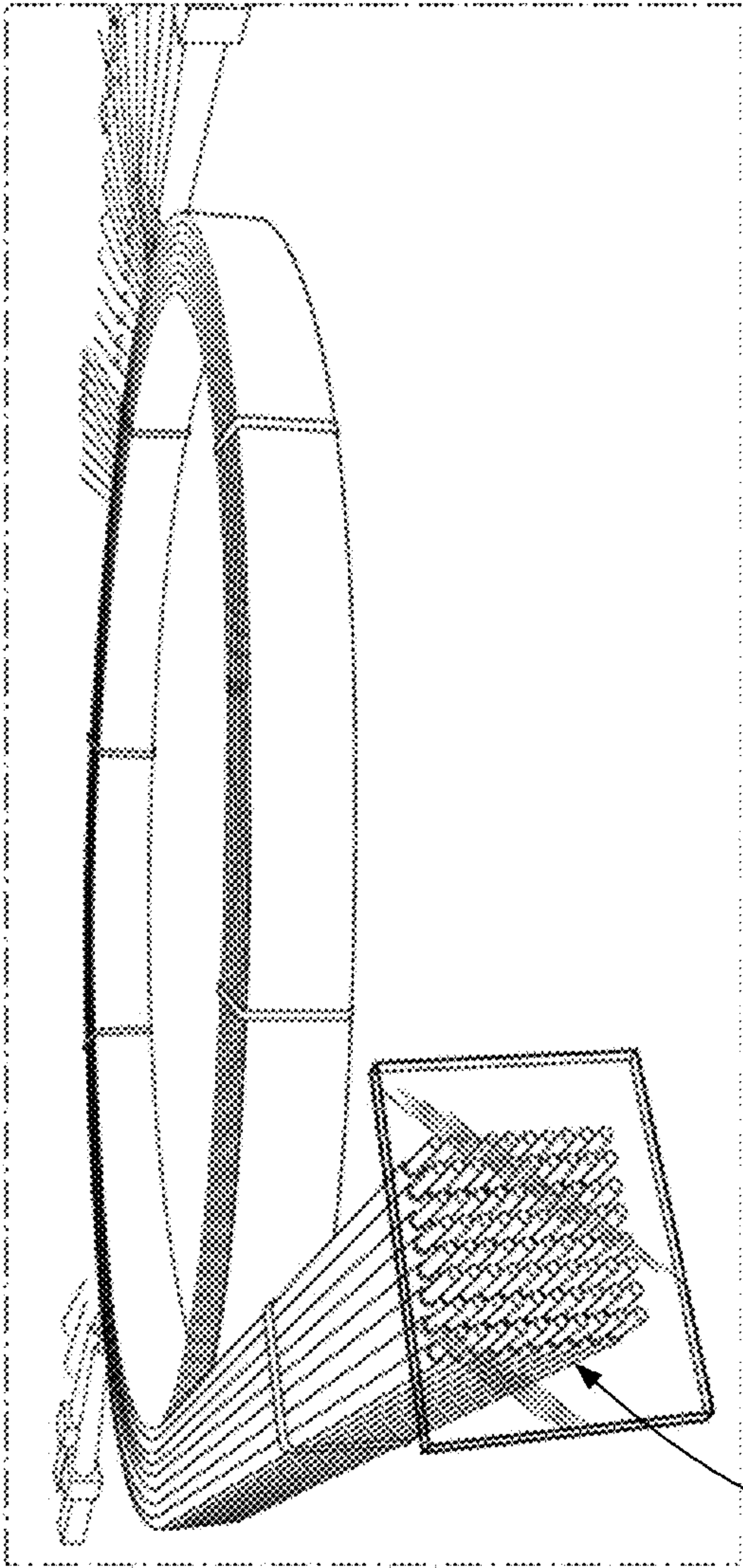


**FIG. 4**



**FIG. 5**





**FIG. 6**

202

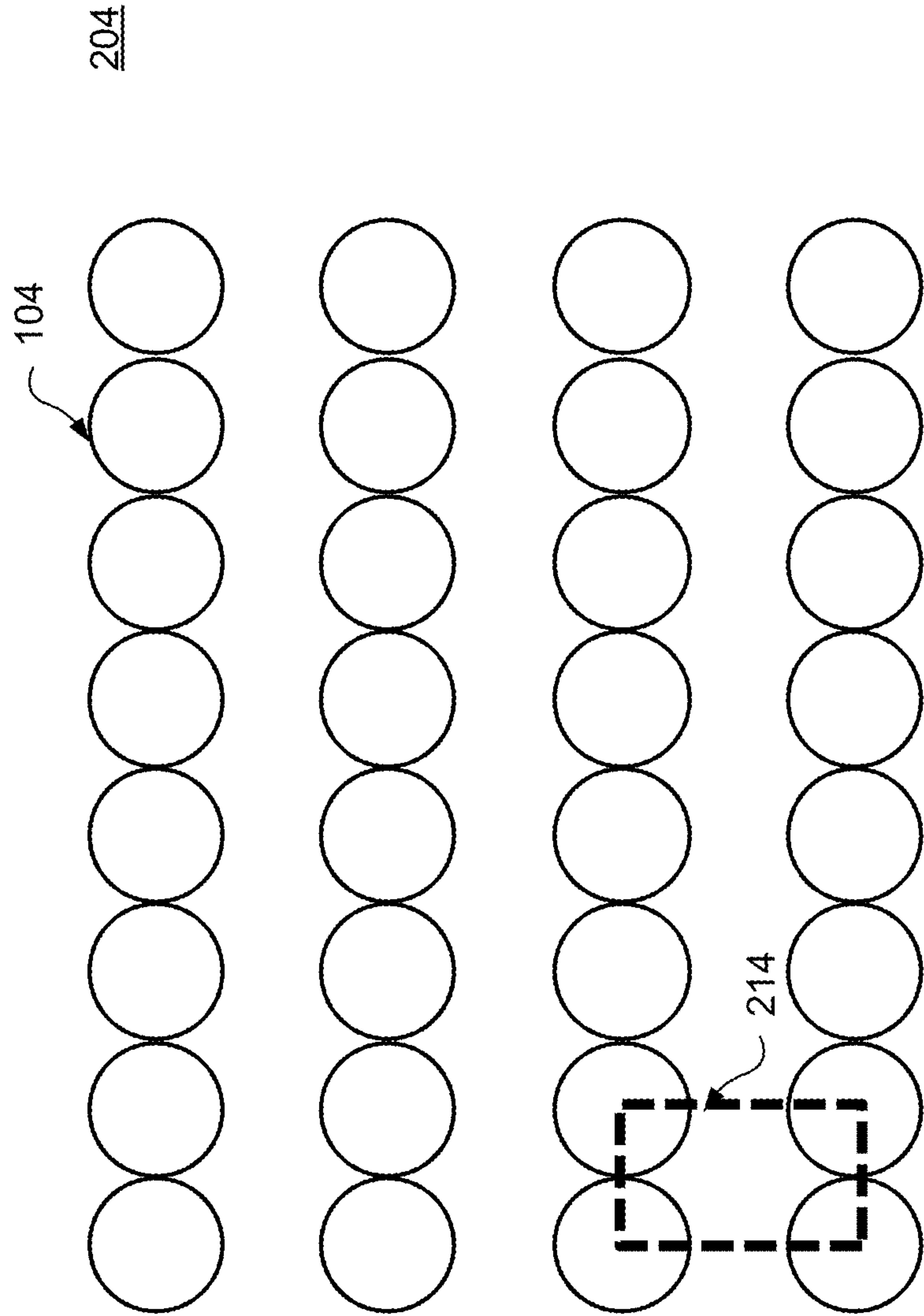


FIG. 7



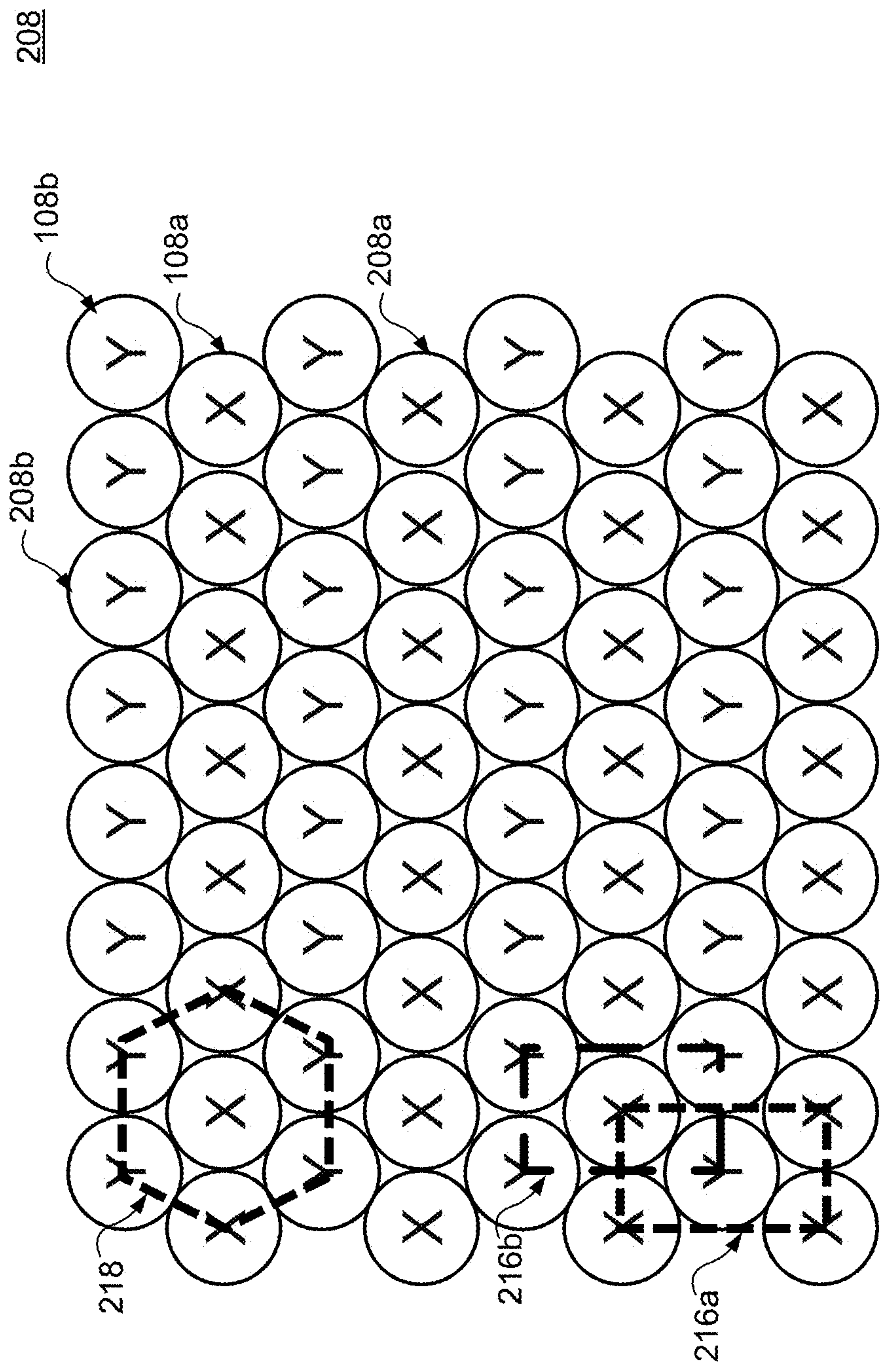


FIG. 8

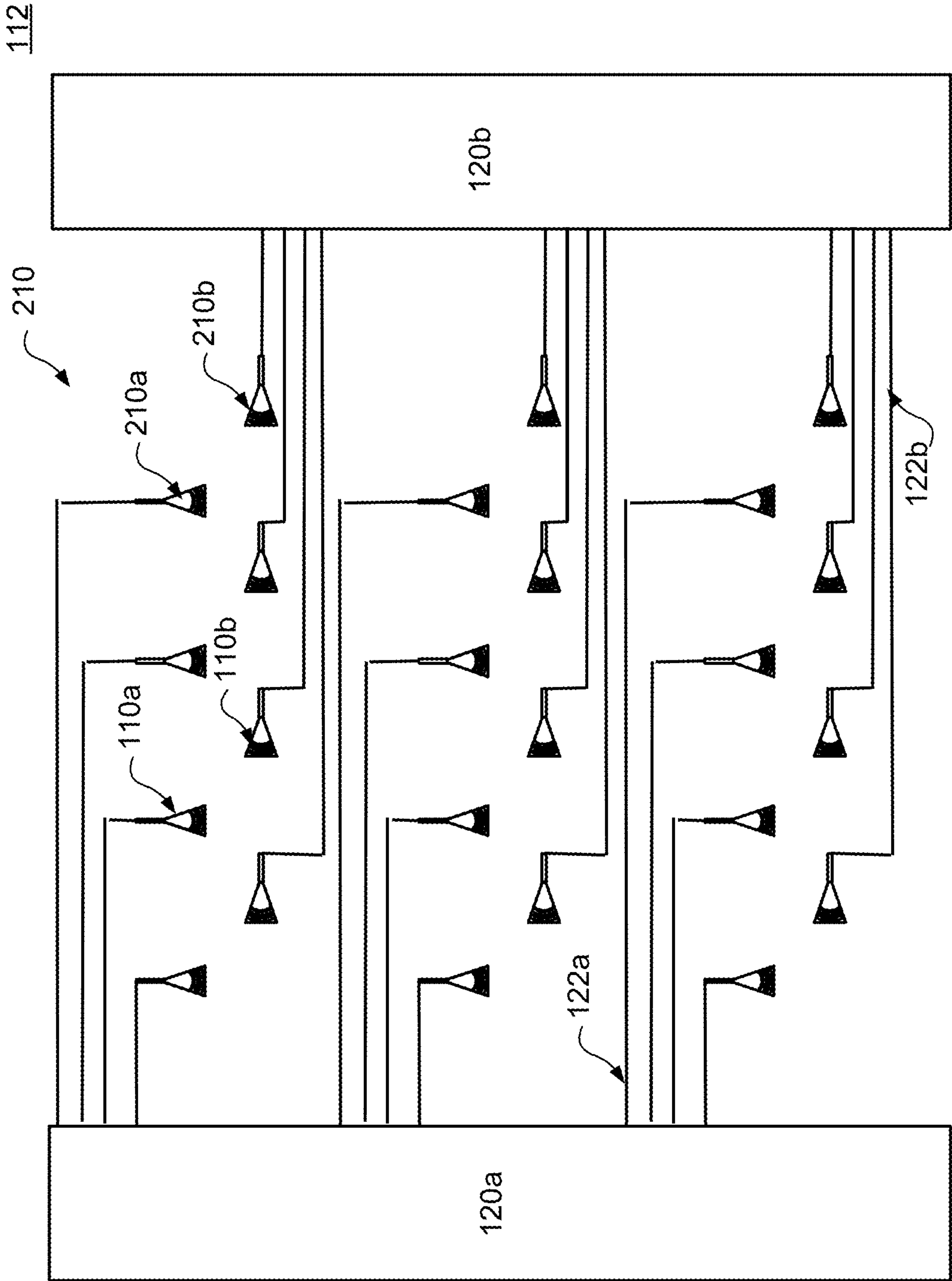


FIG. 9

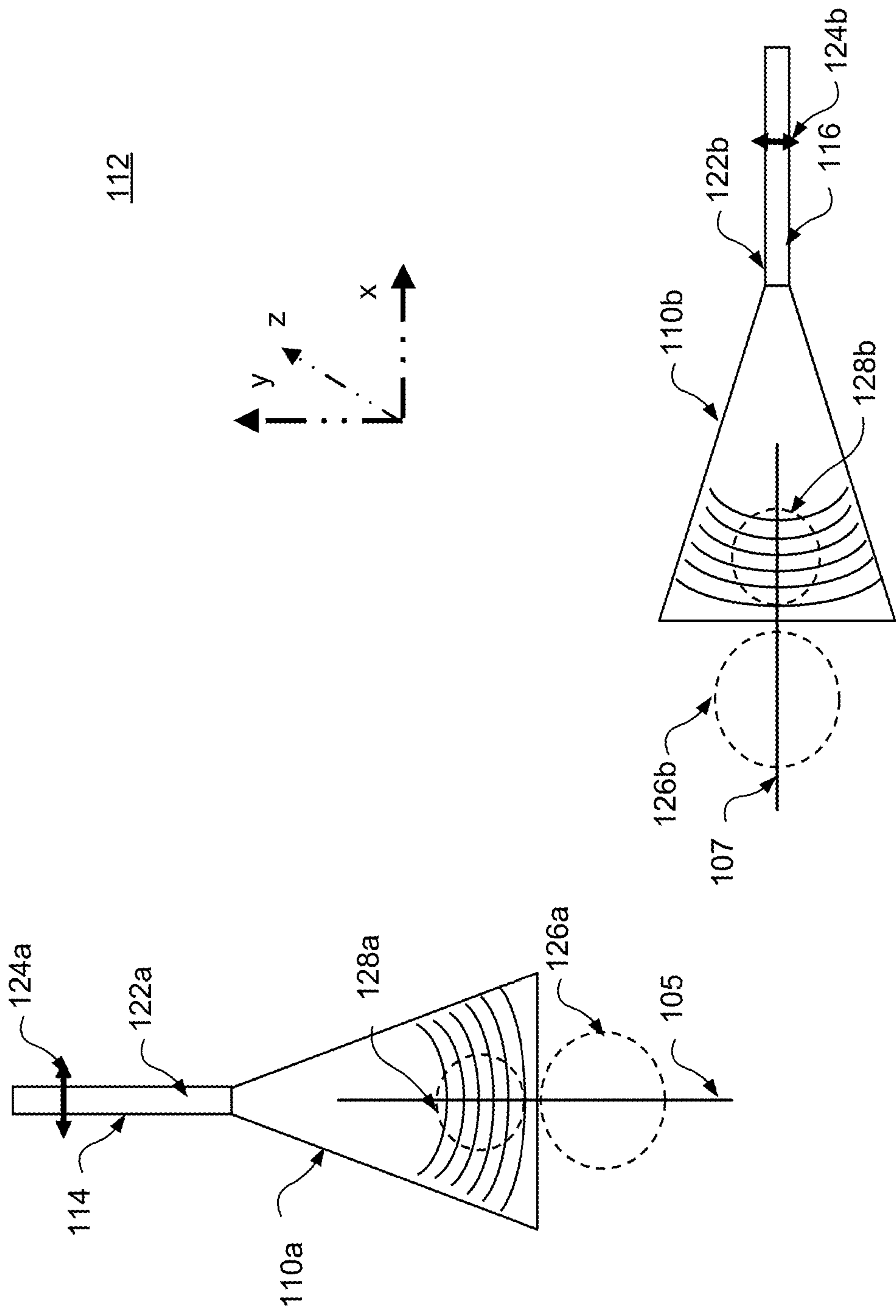
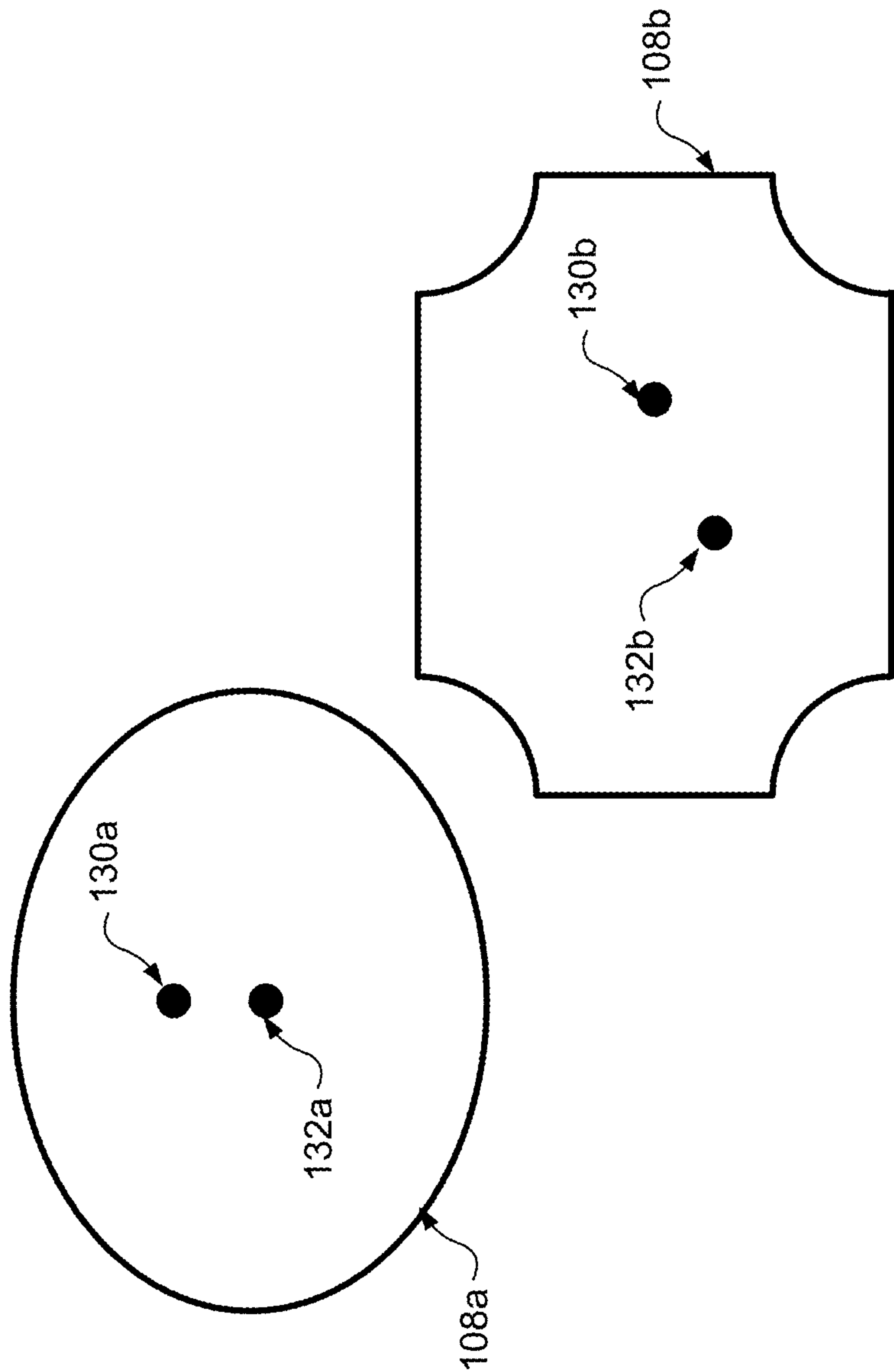
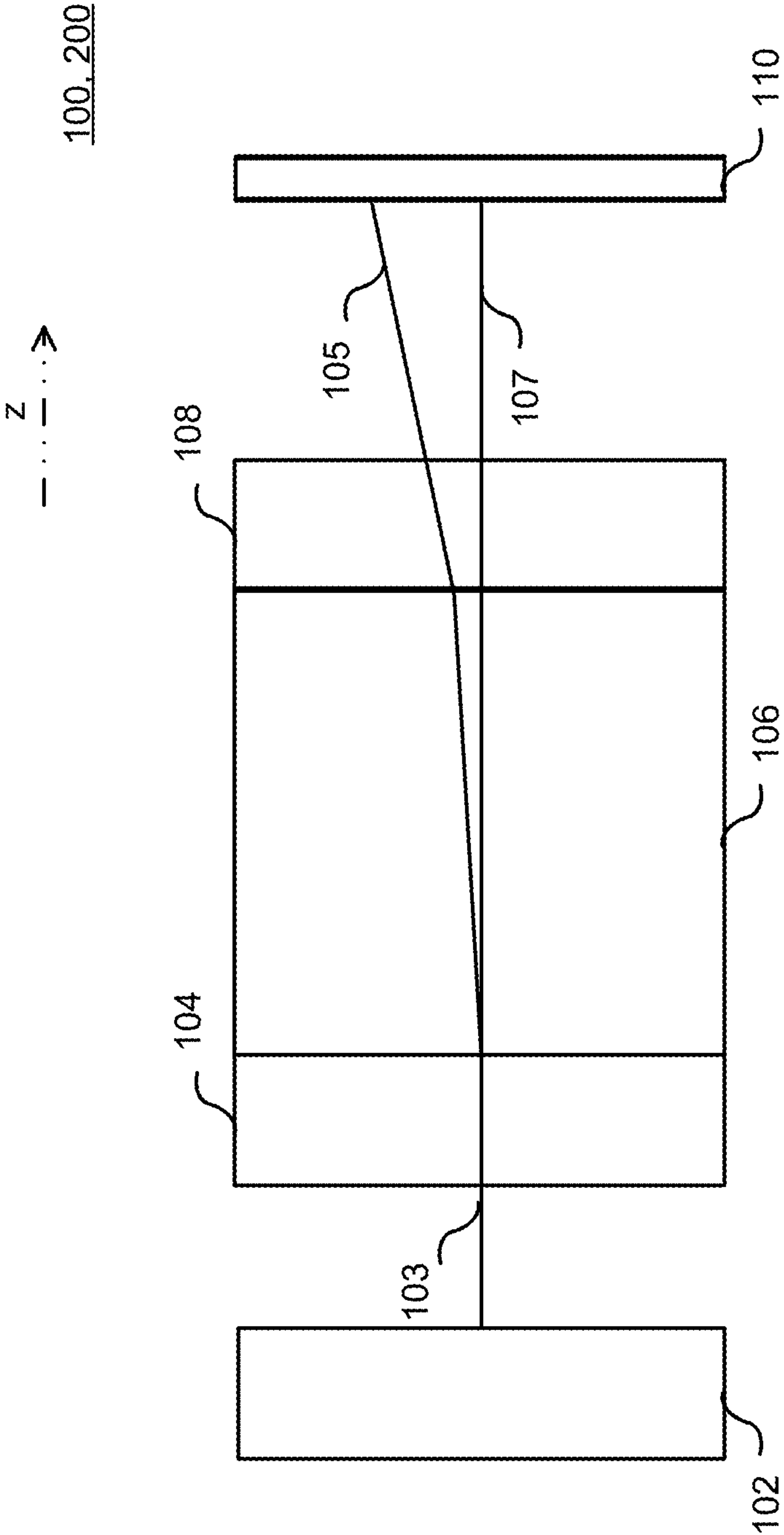


FIG. 10

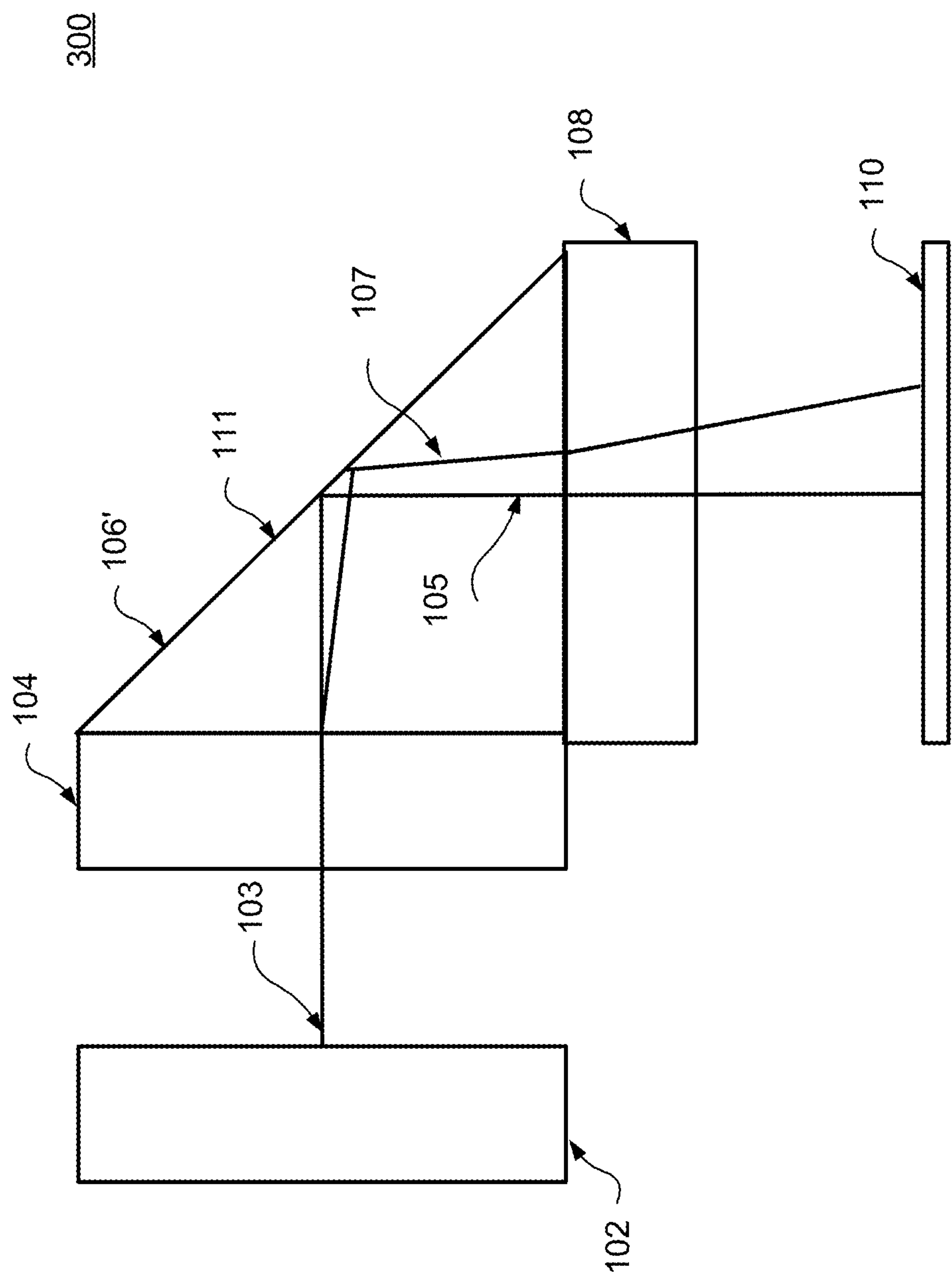


**FIG. 11**

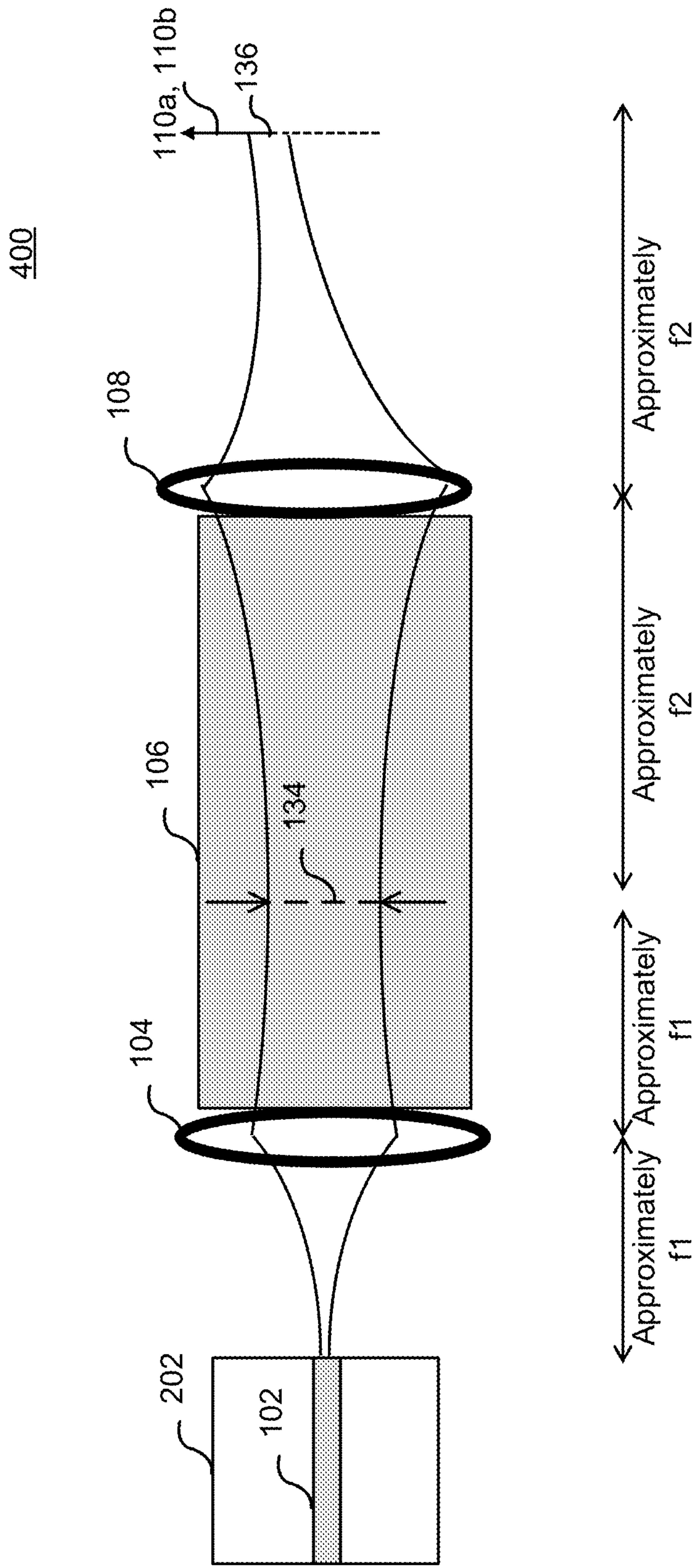


**FIG. 12**

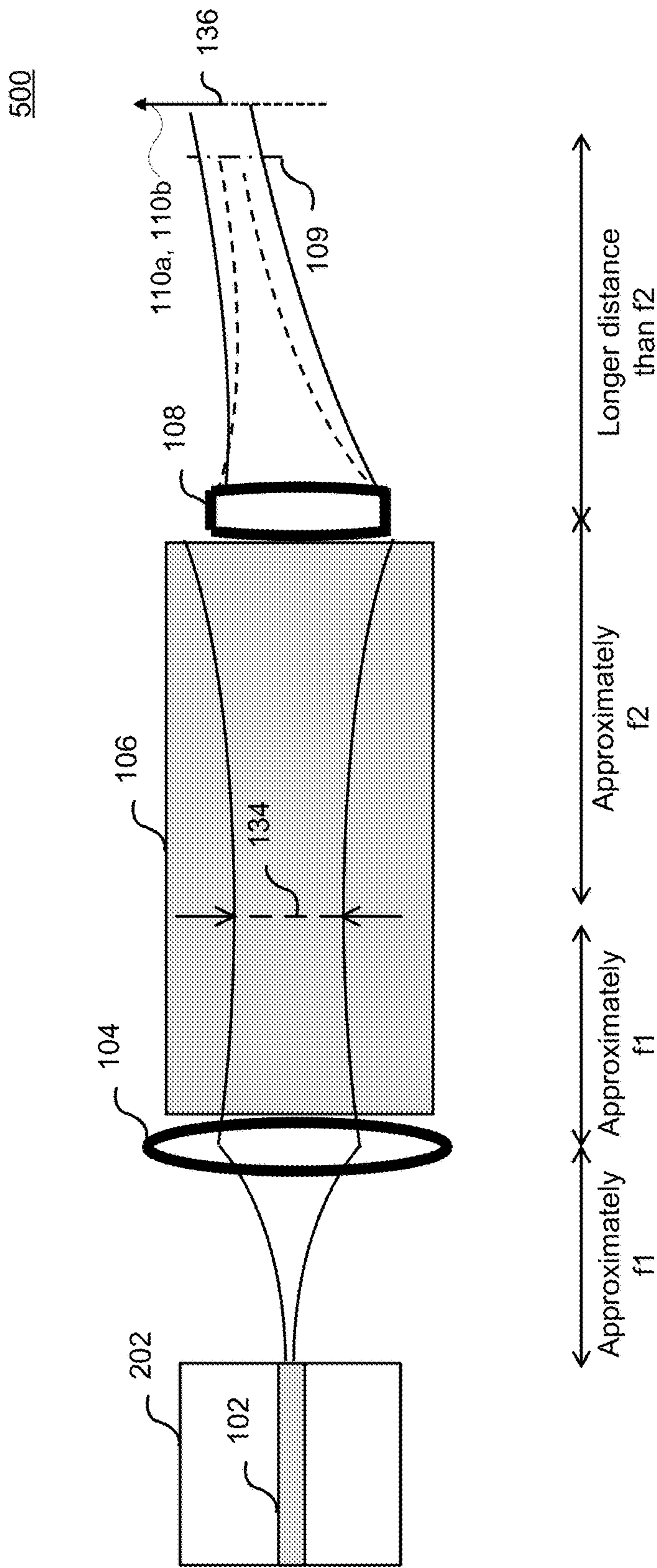




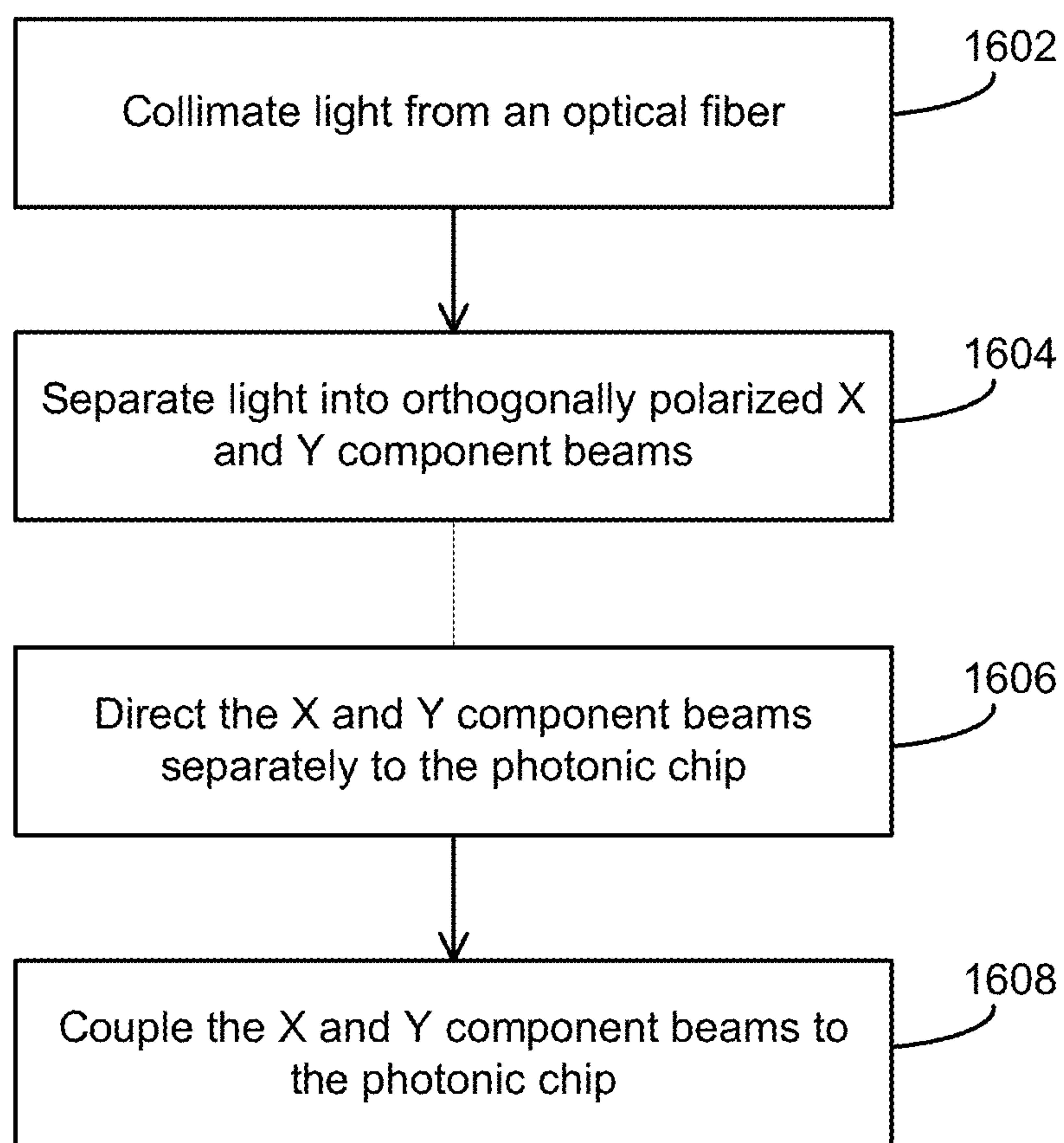
**FIG. 13**



**FIG. 14**



**FIG. 15**



**FIG. 16**



## OPTICAL COUPLING USING POLARIZATION BEAM DISPLACER

### REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

**[0001]** The present application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/184,699 filed on Jun. 25, 2015, and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/162,765 filed on May 24, 2016, both of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entireties.

### TECHNICAL FIELD

**[0002]** The present description relates to optical coupling, and more particularly, to an optical coupling apparatus incorporating a polarization beam displacer.

### BACKGROUND

**[0003]** For many photonic applications such as high-capacity photonic switching, photonic transmitters and photonic receivers, it is necessary to couple light between optical fibers and a photonic chip. There are size limitations to the design of the coupler. A typical large size photonic chip may be in the scale of 25 mm by 25 mm. Single mode optical fibers produced commercially typically have a cladding diameter of 125 nm to 250 nm. In such a case, a maximum of 100-200 fibers can be arranged in a line across a photonic chip. To achieve a larger number count, such as 1000 fibers, a two-dimensional array of fibers may be required. Coupling an array of fibers to a photonic chip can be achieved using an array of optical couplers.

**[0004]** Light propagating in most optical fibers contains two orthogonal polarization components. Photonic chip circuits, however, often operate in a single polarization. One solution is to implement so called polarization diversity to perform the desired operations of the chip on two polarization components in parallel. For example, in a photonic switch with polarization diversity, the switching between inputs and outputs may be done by switching both components in an identical manner. As well, in a receiver for a polarization encoded signal, each component may need to be directed to a separate receiving circuit operating in a single polarization of light.

**[0005]** Accordingly, an apparatus is desired that can couple light between a fiber array and a photonic chip with polarization diversity.

### SUMMARY

**[0006]** The following presents a summary of some aspects or embodiments of the disclosure in order to provide a basic understanding of the disclosure. This summary is not an extensive overview of the disclosure. It is not intended to identify key or critical elements of the disclosure or to delineate the scope of the disclosure. Its sole purpose is to present some embodiments of the disclosure in a simplified form as a prelude to the more detailed description that is presented later.

**[0007]** Described herein are apparatuses and methods for coupling light between an optical fiber (or an optical fiber array) and a photonic chip. In accordance with disclosed embodiments, the optical coupling apparatus uses an off-chip polarization splitter/combiner and on-chip surface grating couplers (SGCs) configured for operation in a single polarization state.

**[0008]** In accordance with one aspect of the disclosure, there is provided an optical coupling apparatus for coupling an optical fiber to a photonic chip. The apparatus includes a collimating microlens for collimating light from the optical fiber; a polarization splitting beam displacer for separating the light collimated by the collimating microlens into orthogonally polarized X and Y component beams; at least one focusing microlens for directing the X and Y component beams separately onto the photonic chip; and first and second surface grating couplers (SGCs) orthogonally disposed on the photonic chip and configured for operation in a same polarization state, for coupling the X and Y component beams, respectively, to the photonic chip.

**[0009]** In accordance with some embodiments, the at least one focusing microlens comprises a single focusing microlens for directing both the X and Y component beams, respectively, onto the first and second SGCs. In accordance with other embodiments, the at least one focusing microlens comprises first and second focusing microlenses for directing the X and Y component beams, respectively, onto the first and second SGCs, respectively.

**[0010]** In accordance with some embodiments, the optical coupling apparatus further comprises an array of optical fibers including the optical fiber; a collimating microlens array including the collimating microlens, for collimating light from the array of optical fibers, a focusing microlens array including the at least one focusing microlens, for directing the X and Y component beams separately onto the photonic chip; and an SGC array configured for operation in a same polarization state and comprising first and second SGC sub-arrays including the first and second SGCs, respectively. The polarization splitting beam displacer is configured for separating light collimated by each microlens of the collimating microlens array into orthogonally polarized X and Y component beams; and the first and second SGC sub-arrays are configured for coupling the X and Y component beams, respectively, separately to the photonic chip.

**[0011]** In accordance with another aspect of the disclosure, there is provided a method for coupling light between an optical fiber and a photonic chip. The method comprises collimating light from the optical fiber; separating the collimated light into orthogonally polarized X and Y component beams; directing the X and Y component beams separately onto the photonic chip; and coupling the X and Y component beams to the photonic chip respectively by first and second surface grating couplers (SGCs) orthogonally disposed on the photonic chip and configured for operation in a same polarization state.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

**[0012]** These and other features of the disclosure will become more apparent from the description in which reference is made to the following appended drawings.

**[0013]** FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an optical coupling apparatus, according to one embodiment of the disclosure.

**[0014]** FIG. 2 is an illustration of the divergence of the X, Y component beams of the embodiment of FIG. 1.

**[0015]** FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an optical coupling apparatus, according to another embodiment of the disclosure.

**[0016]** FIG. 4 is an illustration of the divergence of the X, Y component beams of the embodiment of FIG. 3.

**[0017]** FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 3 including a two-dimensional fiber array.



[0018] FIG. 6 is an example of a two-dimensional fiber array that can be used as part of or in connection with the optical coupling apparatus.

[0019] FIG. 7 is a cross-section view of a collimating microlens array, according to one embodiment.

[0020] FIG. 8 is a cross-section view of a focusing microlens array, according to one embodiment.

[0021] FIG. 9 is an array of surface grating couplers on a photonic circuit with polarization diversity, according to one embodiment.

[0022] FIG. 10 is a close-up view of two surface grating couplers in the embodiment of FIG. 9.

[0023] FIG. 11 is an example of intersections of X and Y component beams on their corresponding focusing microlenses.

[0024] FIG. 12 is an elevation view of the optical coupling apparatus, according to one embodiment.

[0025] FIG. 13 is an elevation view of the optical coupling apparatus, according to another embodiment.

[0026] FIG. 14 is an optical coupling apparatus with image magnifying, according to one embodiment.

[0027] FIG. 15 is an optical coupling apparatus with image magnifying, according to another embodiment, illustrating a clipping effect.

[0028] FIG. 16 is a flowchart of a method for coupling from a fiber to a photonic chip, according to some embodiments.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0029] The following detailed description contains, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details in order to provide a thorough understanding of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure. It is apparent, however, that the preferred embodiments may be practiced without these specific details or with an equivalent arrangement. In other instances, some well-known structures and devices are shown in block diagram form to avoid unnecessarily obscuring the preferred embodiments of the disclosure. The description should in no way be limited to the illustrative implementations, drawings, and techniques illustrated below, including the exemplary designs and implementations illustrated and described herein, but may be modified within the scope of the appended claims along with their full scope of equivalents.

[0030] Described herein are apparatus and method for coupling light between an optical fiber (or an optical fiber array) and a photonic chip. For the purpose of this disclosure, a “channel” refers to the passage between one optical fiber and the photonic chip.

[0031] One way to achieve polarization diversity for a photonic chip is to split light from the output of the optical fiber into two orthogonal polarization components by a polarization splitter (PS). The two components are referred to as an X component and a Y component, respectively. One of the components, for example the X component, may be coupled into the photonic chip as a Transverse Electric (TE) mode, and the other component, for example the Y component, may be coupled into the photonic chip as a Transverse Magnetic (TM) mode. The PS can be used with a polarization rotator (PR), where one of the components can be rotated by the PR so that both components can be in the same mode, be it TE or TM. The PS and PR can be referred to collectively as a polarization splitter-rotator (PSR). After performing desired operations of the photonic chip sepa-

rately for the two components, one component can be rotated again by another PR, and recombined with the other component by a polarization combiner (PC). The PR and PC can be referred to collectively as polarization rotator-combiner (PRC).

[0032] An on-chip PS/PC or PSR/PRC can be physically large and may have large optical loss. An off-chip PS/PC or PSR/PRC can have lower optical loss, by using bulk materials and thin films. However, the cost of off-chip PS/PC or PSR/PRC can be high unless they are shared between many channels.

[0033] On-chip PSR/PRC may be used with edge couplers. However, edge couplers may not scale to a large channel count because of the comparatively large outer diameters of optical fibers. For example, a single line of 1000 single mode optical fibers can be 12.5 cm wide, which can be 5 times the width of the edge of a large size chip.

[0034] A surface grating coupler (SGC) is an optical device that may be fabricated on a photonic chip, which couples light from an incident optical beam into one or more waveguides of the photonic chip. The SGC may also be used in the opposite direction to couple light from the photonic chip to an optical fiber. An SGC may couple light into a TE polarization mode of a waveguide. Such an SGC is called a TE SGC. Another type of an SGC may couple light into a TM polarization mode of a waveguide. Such an SGC is called a TM SGC. Both TE SGC and TM SGC are configured for operation only in a single polarization mode. For light of a given wavelength and incident angle, a TE SGC and TM SGC have different structures, because the effective refractive index of TE modes and TM modes are different. SGCs include very small scale features that are challenging to make in low-cost manufacturing processes, and it is difficult to achieve the nominal coupling angle with high yield. The coupling angle of the TE SGC and TM SGC react differently to variations of the manufacturing process. Thus, it is extremely challenging to manufacture TE SGC and TM SGC of the same coupling angle in the same photonic chip, with high yield. Accordingly, it may be advantageous to construct a dual-polarization coupling apparatus having only one type of SGC.

[0035] A SGC that couples incident light of both polarization components to respectively TE and TM modes of one or two waveguides is known as a dual-polarization SGC. However, dual-polarization SGCs are much more difficult to manufacture than single-polarization SGCs, and the optical loss of a dual-polarization SGC is several dB worse than that of a single-polarization SGC, be it TE SGC or TM SGC. Thus, it may be advantageous to construct a dual-polarization coupling apparatus, without using any dual-polarization SGC.

[0036] In accordance with various embodiments of the disclosure, an optical coupling apparatus is provided incorporating an off-chip PS/PC and single-polarization SGCs.

[0037] FIG. 1 is a simplified illustration of an optical coupling apparatus 100, according to one embodiment of the disclosure.

[0038] Referring to FIG. 1, light beam 103 from an optical fiber 102 is collimated by a collimating microlens 104. A PS 106, referred to as a polarization splitting beam displacer, splits the light beam 103 collimated by the collimating microlens 104 into orthogonally polarized X, Y component beams 105, 107. In the embodiment illustrated by way of FIG. 1, the polarization splitting beam displacer 106 is a



birefringent plate. As will be explained in more detail, the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** includes polarization-dependent properties that can cause the X, Y component beams **105**, **107** to propagate along different optical paths. In other words, the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** splits a dual-polarization light beam **103** into two single-polarization component beams **105**, **107**, which are spatially separated from each other. The separation may be achieved at the output of the polarization splitting beam displacer **106**. Alternatively or additionally, the X, Y component beams **105**, **107** can exit the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** at an angle with respect to each other. The X, Y component beams **105**, **107** are passed through a focusing microlens **108** which directs the X and Y component beams **105**, **107** separately onto a photonic chip **112**. The photonic chip **112** includes first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b** for coupling the X and Y component beams **105**, **107**, respectively, to the photonic chip **112**. The first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b** are single polarization SGCs configured for operation in a same polarization state (such as TE, for example). As will be explained in more detail, the X and Y component beams **105**, **107** are directed away from each other by the focusing microlens **108** and towards the photonic chip **112**, such that angles of incidence of the X and Y component beams **105**, **107** onto the photonic chip **112** correspond to coupling angles of the corresponding SGCs **110a**, **110b**.

[0039] The first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b** are orthogonally disposed on the photonic chip **112**. That is, the first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b** have layout axes forming a 90° angle with respect to each other. In particular, the SGC layout axis **116** (i.e., parallel to the y direction in FIG. 1) of the SGC **110a** for X component is orthogonal to the SGC layout axis **114** (i.e., parallel to the x direction in FIG. 1) of the SGC **110b** for Y component. This way, the electric field **124** of the X component beam **105** can be orthogonal to the SGC layout axis **116** of the first SGC **110a**. As well, electric field **126** of the Y component beam **107** can be orthogonal to the SGC layout axis **114** of the second SGC **110b**. Thus, both SGCs **110a**, **110b** can operate in a same polarization state. In this particular example, both SGCs **110a**, **110b** have TE polarization even though the X and Y component beams **105**, **107** have orthogonal polarizations. By using the optical coupling apparatus **100**, light from polarization-uncontrolled optical fiber(s) **102** can be coupled to twice the number of polarization-defined waveguides, using the SGCs **110a**, **110b**.

[0040] FIG. 2 is an illustration of the optical paths of the X, Y component beams **105**, **107** in the optical coupling apparatus **100**. As shown in FIG. 2, the central rays of X and Y component beams **105**, **107** propagate through the focusing microlens **108** with intersections **118a**, **118b** respectively and do not propagate on the optical axis of the focusing microlens **108**. To simplify the Figures, the microlenses **104**, **108** are illustrated as flat structures. In practice, microlenses **104**, **108** may have a 3-dimensional profile.

[0041] The optical axis of a microlens in an array of microlenses may be defined as a line normal to the plane of the microlens array that contains the microlens, such that an optical ray propagating along the optical axis passes through the microlens without any angular deviation. For example, if the microlens is of refractive type and has a plane surface and a spherical surface, then the optical axis is through the

most prominent point of the spherical surface. The optical axis of a microlens may not be at its physical center.

[0042] If the center of a beam passes through the optical axis of a microlens, then the beam generally does not acquire any angular deviation. A beam whose central ray passes through a microlens off the optical axis acquires an angular deviation. This known physical principle is exploited to manipulate the light to achieve different angles for the X component beam **105** and the Y component beam **107**.

[0043] The central rays of X and Y component beams **105**, **107** can impinge on the focusing microlens **108** at different points on the focusing microlens **108** and/or at different angles with respect to its optical axis. The focusing microlens **108** can be arranged such that at least one component beam **105**, **107** is an off-axis ray (i.e., a ray that propagates in a plane including the optical axis of the microlens but not along the optical axis). For example, at least one of the X and Y component beams **105**, **107** can impinge on the focusing microlens **108** parallel to its optical axis but offset with respect to its optical axis. Alternatively, the focusing microlens **108** can be arranged such that at least one component beam **105**, **107** is a skew ray (skew beam) (i.e., a ray that is neither parallel to nor intersecting the optical axis of the microlens). The focusing microlens **108** is arranged such that the X component beam **105** is directed along +y direction, and the Y component beam **107** is directed along +x direction.

[0044] The coupling angle of the SGC **110a**, **110b** and the propagation angle in the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** may be different. Therefore, the focusing microlens **108** can be used to change the angles of the component beams **105**, **107** so that they match the coupling angle of the SGC **110a**, **110b**. However, it is to be understood that the focusing microlens **108** may deflect just one of the component beams **105**, **107**. In other words, one of the component beams **105**, **107** can pass through the focusing microlens **108** without acquiring any angular deviation. The focusing microlens **108** focuses each component beam **105**, **107** into a small spot that matches the spot size of the SGC **110a**, **110b**.

[0045] For purposes of simplicity, FIGS. 1 and 2 only illustrate the light beam from one optical fiber **102**. It should be appreciated that the optical fiber **102** can be part of an optical fiber array and a similar result can be replicated across the fiber array. The optical fibers may be arranged in a line, or as a two-dimensional array. For the purpose of this disclosure, the term “array” is used to refer to a one-dimensional array or a two-dimensional array. The optical fiber(s) may be arranged for the light to enter the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** at any desired angle. The optical fiber array may be on a square grid, rectangular grid, hexagonal grid, or another grid. The grid may be uniform or non-uniform.

[0046] Although many embodiments are explained with reference to TE SGCs, it should be appreciated that TM SGCs can be used instead of TE SGCs. For example, the SGCs can be all TM SGCs followed by TM circuits in the photonic chip **112**, or the SGCs can be all TM SGCs followed by PRs to TE circuits in the photonic chip **112**. The orthogonality of the SGC layout axes **116**, **114** of the first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b** enables the use of single-polarization SGCs for dual-polarization coupling purposes.

[0047] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an optical coupling apparatus **200**, according to another embodiment of the



disclosure. Similar to the embodiment of FIG. 1, the light **103** from the fiber **102** becomes separated for X, Y component beams **105**, **107** after passing through the polarization splitting beam displacer **106**. However, in the embodiment illustrated by way of FIG. 3, the X component beam **105** propagates through a first focusing microlens **108a** for directing the X component beam **105** to the first SGC **110a** for X component. The Y component beam **107** propagates through a second focusing microlens **108b** separate from the first focusing microlens **108a** for directing the Y component beam **107** to the second SGC **110b** for Y component.

[0048] FIG. 4 is an illustration of the optical paths of the X, Y component beams **105**, **107** in the optical coupling apparatus **200**. Similar to the embodiment of FIG. 1, the central ray of X component beam **105** does not propagate through the focusing microlens **108a** via its optical axis (with intersections **118a**). As well, the central ray of Y component beam **107** does not propagate through the focusing microlens **108b** via its optical axis (with intersection **118b**). The focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** can be arranged such that at least one component beam **105**, **107** is an off-axis ray. For example, at least one of the X and Y component beams **105**, **107** can impinge on the corresponding focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** parallel to their respective optical axis but offset with respect to their respective optical axis. Alternatively, the focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** can be arranged such that at least one component beam **105**, **107** is a skew ray (skew beam). The focusing microlens **108a** is arranged such that the X component beam **105** is directed along +y direction, and the focusing microlens **108b** is arranged such that Y component beam **107** is directed along +x direction.

[0049] As explained with reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, the focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** may be used to change the angles of the component beams **105**, **107**. However, it is to be understood that the focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** may deflect only one or none of the component beams **105**, **107**. In other words, one or both component beams **105**, **107** can pass through the focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** without acquiring any angular deviation. The focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** focus each component beam **105**, **107** into a small spot that matches the spot size of the SGC **110a**, **110b**.

[0050] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the optical coupling apparatus **200** including a two-dimensional optical fiber array **202**. As shown, the two-dimensional optical fiber array **202** is a 2×2 array, and X, Y component beams **105**, **107** from one optical fiber of the 2×2 array are traced through the optical coupling apparatus **200**.

[0051] When the optical fiber **102** is a member of an optical fiber array **202**, the collimating microlens **104** is a member of a collimating microlens array **204** and the focusing microlens **108** is a member of a focusing microlens array **208**. The polarization splitting beam displacer **106** can be used to separate light collimated by each microlens of the collimating microlens array **104** into orthogonally polarized X and Y component beams. The SGCs on the photonic chip **112** form a SGC array **210** including first and second SGC sub-arrays **210a**, **210b** configured for coupling the X and Y component beams, respectively, to the photonic chip **112**. As discussed above, the SGCs in the SGC array **210** are configured for operation in a same polarization state (such as TE). Every SGC for X component in the first SGC sub-array **210a** is orthogonally disposed on the photonic chip **112** with respect to a SGC for Y component in the second SGC

sub-array **210b**. The dashed lines in FIG. 5 are drawing construction lines, to illustrate the relative position of the elements. Although in the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 5, a single polarization splitting beam displacer **106** is provided to split all the beams from the fiber array **202**, it should be understood more than one polarization splitting beam displacer may be used in other implementations. The collimating **204** and focusing **208** microlens arrays may include many microlenses for collimating light emitted by multiple optical fibers in an optical fiber array.

[0052] FIG. 6 is an example of a two-dimensional optical fiber array **202** that can be used as part of or in connection with the optical coupling apparatus **100**, **200**. It is to be understood that the figure is provided only for illustration of a particular example and other arrangements of the two-dimensional optical fiber array are possible.

[0053] According to various embodiments, the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** has polarization-dependent properties enabling splitting of an incident dual-polarization light into two orthogonal components. A typical polarization splitting beam displacer uses a crystal that has a refractive index which varies depending on the polarization and the direction of propagation of light. Materials for polarization splitting beam displacers may include Yttrium Vanadate (YVO<sub>4</sub>) crystal, Barium Borate ( $\alpha$ -BBO) crystal, Calcite crystal, Rutile (TiO<sub>2</sub>) crystal, and the like. It should be understood that various other suitable materials can be used for the polarization splitting beam displacer **106**. The polarization splitting beam displacer **106** may be mated to the microlens arrays (the collimating microlens array **204** and/or the focusing microlens array **208**) using an optically transparent adhesive. With a YVO<sub>4</sub> crystal, a polarization splitting beam displacer can produce 0.1 mm lateral displacement for each 1.0 mm thickness of crystal. Thus, a displacement of 127  $\mu$ m may be achieved with a crystal of approximately 1.3 mm thickness (1:10 ratio). Crystals can be precision polished to achieve accurate beam displacement.

[0054] Depending on the orientation of the incident light with respect to the axis of the crystal, the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** may pass one polarization component undeviated and the other at an angle, or may deviate both component beams **105**, **107** by equal and opposite angles with respect to the incident light **103**, or may deviate both component beams by non-equal angles. In all cases, the purpose is to create two component beams **105**, **107** which propagate differently through the polarization splitting beam displacer **106**, so as to produce a separation at the output of the polarization splitting beam displacer. The beams **105**, **107** exiting the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** may be parallel to each other, and/or parallel to the incident beam **103**, or may be angled with respect to each other and/or the incident beam. All of the above implementations are possible, and depending on the desired characteristics any suitable arrangement and design can be used.

[0055] Various types of microlenses, such as refractive, diffractive, spherical, aspherical, elliptical, or graded-index (GRIN) microlenses, may be used for the collimating microlens **104** and/or focusing microlens **108**. As well, microlenses with various manufacturing materials and methods may be used including glass microlenses, polymer microlenses, etched microlenses, deposited microlenses, or diffusion microlenses. The particular design and manufacture of



the microlenses can be selected based on cost and specification requirements of a particular implementation.

[0056] In some embodiments, one or both of the collimating and focusing microlenses **104**, **108** may comprise compound lens elements to reduce an undesired optical aberration such as spherical aberration, chromatic aberration and/or coma aberration.

[0057] Mechanical spacers may be provided between successive elements to achieve correct optical beam focusing distance(s). In particular, mechanical spacers may be placed between the fiber **102** and the collimating microlens **104**, between the collimating microlens **104** and the focusing microlens **108**, and/or between the focusing microlens **108** and the photonic chip **112**. The mechanical spacers are used for achieving correct optical distances between the elements. A spacer may be provided defining a distance between the focusing microlens **108** and the photonic chip **112**. Each mechanical spacer may be a planar optical element, with optional mechanical structures. The part of each mechanical spacer through which the beam passes may be made of air, glass, index-matching adhesive, or any other suitable transparent optical material, dependent on factors such as the type of the microlenses.

[0058] According to the disclosure, for cases where the microlenses **104**, **108** are refractive, diffractive or GRIN type, the gaps between the fiber **102** and the collimating microlens **104** and between the focusing microlens **108** and the photonic chip **112** may be filled with air or other medium of low refractive index. When the microlenses **104**, **108** are GRIN microlenses, these gaps may be filled with index matching material such as optical adhesive. Anti-reflection coatings may be used to reduce back-reflection.

[0059] According to the embodiment illustrated by way of example by FIG. 3, for light beam from one fiber **102**, two focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** are used for directing the X and Y component beams, respectively, onto the first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b**. FIGS. 7 and 8 illustrate a spatial relationship of the focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b**, according to such an embodiment.

[0060] FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view of a collimating microlens array **204**; and FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view of a corresponding focusing microlens array **208**. The collimating microlenses highlighted by rectangle **214** in FIG. 7 may be of the same scale as the focusing microlenses highlighted by rectangle **216a**, **216b** in FIG. 8. As shown, the focusing microlens array **108** can include first and second focusing microlens sub-arrays **208a**, **208b** for focusing the X and Y component beams, respectively, onto the first and second SGC sub-arrays **210a**, **210b**. The first focusing microlens sub-array **208a** for focusing the X component beams is symbolized by circles with X; and the second focusing microlens sub-array **208b** for focusing the Y component beams is symbolized by circles with Y. Focusing microlenses highlighted by rectangle **216a** in FIG. 8 are used for focusing the X component beams from the collimating microlenses highlighted by rectangle **214** in FIG. 7. Focusing microlenses highlighted by rectangle **216b** are used for focusing the corresponding Y component beams. As illustrated in FIG. 8, the first and second focusing microlens sub-arrays **208a**, **208b** are arranged in alternating rows in the focusing microlens array **208**. The alternating rows can form a non-rectangular pattern of microlenses. In one particular embodiment, a focusing microlens **108b** for Y component can be offset laterally with respect to a corresponding

focusing microlens **108a** for X component by an amount generally equal to the radius of the focusing microlens. In such an example, the focusing microlens **108b** for Y component is arranged diagonally at 60 degrees from the corresponding focusing microlens **108a** for X component to achieve a nearly hexagonal close-packed arrangement (illustrated by hexagon **218**). It should be understood that other suitable spatial relationships between the X focusing microlenses **108a** and Y focusing microlenses **108b** can be arranged.

[0061] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 7 and FIG. 8, the number of focusing microlenses in the focusing microlens array **208** is twice the number of collimating microlenses in the collimating microlens array **204**. In some implementations, microlenses in the focusing microlens array **208** may be closer to each other than those in the collimating microlens array **204**, because the focusing microlens array **208** has twice smaller pitch as the collimating microlens array **204**. Thus, there may be more clipping of the edges of the beams at the collimating microlens array **208**.

[0062] According to an alternative embodiment, an optical coupling apparatus is provided where two beams can share a microlens of the focusing microlens array **208**. The two beams may be an X polarization beam from one optical fiber and a Y polarization beam from a different optical fiber. Accordingly, the focusing microlens array **208** may not require a second subarray of microlenses. Instead, the focusing microlens array **208** can have additional row(s) and/or column(s) at the edge(s) of the array. The center of each of the two beams that share a particular focusing microlens **108** may impinge on the shared microlens at a different angle and/or at a different point on the microlens. Thus, the microlens can direct them to different SGCs **110a**, **110b** at their respective desired angles, similar to the embodiments described above.

[0063] FIG. 9 illustrates an SGC array **210** on the photonic chip **112** with polarization diversity, according to one embodiment of the disclosure. As shown in the figure, the SGC array **210** includes a first SGC sub-array **210a** for coupling the X component beams and a separate second SGC sub-array **210b** for coupling the Y component beams. The first SGC sub-array **210a** receives the X component beams and is connected to a photonic circuit **120a** for processing X component. The second SGC sub-array **210b** receives the Y component beams and is connected to a photonic circuit **120b** for processing Y component. In this particular embodiment, the SGCs of the sub-arrays **210a**, **210b** are shown as having the same physical structure, but rotated 90 degrees from each other. Optical waveguides for the X, Y component beams implement re-entrant routing to avoid crossing between the waveguides **122a** for X component beams and the waveguides **122b** for Y component beams. This may be realized for a large fiber count such as 1000 fibers.

[0064] FIG. 10 is a close-up view of two surface grating couplers **110a**, **110b** of the SGC array **210** of FIG. 9. The two SGCs **110a**, **110b** are both single polarization such as TE polarization. The X component beam **105** is in a plane that is formed by the normal to the photonic chip **112** and an output waveguide **122a** of the SGC **110a**. The Y component beam **107** is in a plane that is formed by the normal to the photonic chip **112** and an output waveguide **122b** of the second SGC **110b**.



[0065] A dotted circle 126a illustrates a cross-section of the X polarization component beam 105 at a distance above the photonic chip 112. The direction of propagation is mostly into the page (along the z axis) and at an acute angle to the y direction. A cross-section of the X polarization component beam 105 at a surface of the photonic chip 112 is illustrated by a dotted circle 128a. The X polarization component beam 105 propagates through an output waveguide 122a in TEO mode containing the X component. The electric field 124a of the X component beam 105 in the waveguide 122a is along the x direction in the plane of the photonic chip 112.

[0066] A dotted circle 126b illustrates a cross-section of the Y polarization component beam 107 at a distance above the photonic chip 112. The direction of propagation is mostly into the page (along the z axis) and at an acute angle to the y direction. A cross-section of the Y polarization component beam 107 at the surface of the photonic chip 112 is illustrated by the dotted circle 128b. The Y polarization component beam 107 propagates through an output waveguide 122b where TEO mode is excited, containing the Y component. The electric field 124b of the Y component beam 107 in the waveguide 122b is along the y direction in the plane of the photonic chip 112.

[0067] In this particular embodiment, the illustrated SGCs are of a curved focusing type. It should be understood that other suitable types of gratings can be used, such as a straight grating followed by a taper that narrows to an output waveguide.

[0068] In some embodiments, at least one of the X component beam 105 and Y component beam 107 is off-axis when they intersect their respective focusing microlenses. This is to compensate for the angle induced by the polarization splitting beam displacer 106 and direct the beams separately, so that each component beam 105, 107 can impinge on their respective SGC 110a, 110b at its corresponding coupling angle. The coupling angle of a SGC refers to the angle of incidence at which the interference created by the incident beam hitting the SGC grating is constructive and the corresponding SGC achieves a maximum efficiency. In one particular embodiment, the coupling angle for the SGC 110a for coupling the X component beam 105 is the same as the coupling angle for the SGC 110b for coupling the Y component beam 107.

[0069] In some embodiments, the maximum efficiency may be achieved when the incident beam impinges on the SGC at a small angle to the vertical, typically in the range 10 to 20 degrees, to reduce back-reflection and for easy manufacturing. However, in other embodiments, a normal-incidence SGC can be used where the SGC is of a type that functions maximally with a normal incident beam. In such cases, the focusing microlens(es) are arranged to produce beams that are normal to the photonic chip 112.

[0070] FIG. 11 illustrates an example of intersections of X and Y component beams 105, 107 on their corresponding focusing microlenses 108a, 108b. As discussed above, at least one of the two orthogonal component beams 105, 107 intersects the focusing microlens 108a, 108b off-axis.

[0071] As shown in FIG. 11, the microlens 108a for X component can have its optical axis at 130a, whereas the center of X component beam intersects the microlens at 132a; and the microlens 108b of Y component has its optical axis at 130b, whereas the center of Y component beam intersects the microlens at 132b.

[0072] It should be noted that the microlenses 108a and 108b are illustrated in FIG. 11 with arbitrary shapes, and it should be understood that, more generally, microlenses may be of any suitable shape. As described above, the optical axes of the microlenses may be in the physical centers of the microlenses, or may be offset from the physical centers. The optical axes of the microlenses may be within the microlenses or outside of the respective microlenses. As well, the X and Y microlenses may have the same (or similar) or different parameters including shape, focal length, and the like. In one particular embodiment, the X and Y microlenses may have the same focal length and the lengths of the optical paths of the X component beam and the Y component beam can be generally the same.

[0073] Furthermore, the microlenses, and the focusing microlenses in particular, may not have rotational symmetry, i.e. the surface of the microlens may not be part of a surface that can be rotated without changing its shape. One example of such a microlens is a microlens with astigmatism.

[0074] In various embodiments described above, the operation of the optical coupling apparatuses 100, 200 is illustrated with reference to light travelling in the direction from the optical fiber 102 to the photonic chip 112. For example, referring back to FIG. 1, the “collimating” microlens 104 collimates the light beam 103, and the “focusing” microlens 108 focuses the polarized X, Y component beams 105, 107. However, it should be understood that the optical coupling apparatuses 100, 200 can be used or modified for coupling light travelling from the photonic chip 112 to the fiber 102. The optical coupling apparatuses 100, 200 can be further used or modified such that some optical beams couple from the optical fibers to the photonic chip and other optical beams couple from the photonic chip to the optical fibers. Some optical paths may be bidirectional, coupling light in both directions simultaneously. In a special case of the bi-directional scenario, the X component beam of one channel can be coupled from the optical fiber to the photonic chip and the Y component beam of the channel can be coupled from the photonic chip to the optical fiber. This can be useful for a system where an optical fiber is used for signals in both directions and polarization can be a discriminator between forward and return signals.

[0075] When the optical coupling apparatus is used for coupling a photonic chip 112 to an optical fiber 102 or optical fiber array 202, light may travel from the photonic chip to the optical fiber(s). In such cases, first and second SGCs 110a, 110b or SGC sub-arrays 210a, 210b are used for emitting X and Y component beams, respectively, from the photonic chip 112. The focusing microlens 108 or focusing microlens array 208 functions as a collimating microlens or collimating microlens array for collimating the emitted X and Y component beams from the photonic chip 112. The polarization splitting beam displacer 106 functions as a polarization beam combiner (or simply, a PC) for combining the X and Y component beams collimated by the collimating microlens(es) into a dual-polarization beam. The collimating microlens 104 or collimating microlens array 204 functions as a focusing microlens or focusing microlens array. One skilled in the art would appreciate that a same microlens can be referred to as a collimating lens or a focusing microlens, dependent on the direction of light propagation. Similarly, a polarization splitting beam displacer can be referred to as a polarization beam combiner when the direction of the light propagation is reversed. It is therefore to be understood that



the terms “collimating”, “focusing”, “splitter”, and “combiner” are merely identifiers and are not intended to imply direction of propagation of light, which may be reversed as explained above. Furthermore, at small beam sizes, the micro-beams are never truly “collimated” in a sense that they are parallel, non-expanding optical beams. Rather, the beams are re-focused, with a corresponding transformation of Gaussian waist size and position.

[0076] FIG. 12 is an elevation view of the optical coupling apparatuses 100, 200, according to various embodiments of the disclosure. For purposes of simplicity, FIG. 12 illustrates the Y component beam 107 undeviated in the plane of the drawing and the X component beam 105 exiting the polarization splitting beam displacer 106 at a displacement and an angle with respect to the Y component beam 107. However as discussed above, it should be understood that various other implementations are also possible. As well, the deviations of the X component beam 105 through the polarization splitting beam displacer 106 and the focusing microlens 108 in FIG. 12 are illustrated as being in the plane of FIG. 12, it should however be understood that the deviations of the X component beam 105 may occur in an arbitrary plane.

[0077] In some embodiments of the disclosure, the optical fibers 102 may be positioned normal to the photonic chip 112, where light travels along the z axis, that is, perpendicular to the photonic chip 112, or at a small angle to the z axis. According to such embodiments, the overall apparatuses 100, 200 may include long arrays of optical fibers 102, extending a large distance normal to the photonic chip 112 (i.e., along the z-axis).

[0078] In some embodiments, the polarization splitting beam displacer 106 can include or be used in combination with a reflective turning surface to change the direction of the light propagation in order to reduce the height of the overall apparatus. The polarization splitting beam displacer 106 can comprise a polarization-selective reflector. FIG. 13 is an elevational view of an optical coupling apparatus 300, according to one such embodiment. In the embodiment illustrated by way of FIG. 13, the optical coupling apparatus 300 includes a polarization splitting beam displacer 106' which is provided with a reflective turning surface 111 for reflecting the X component beam 105 and the Y component beam 107 differently to achieve a spatial separation between the two component beams.

[0079] For example, the reflective turning surface 111 can be a mirror surface such as a 45° turning mirror surface disposed in an optical path between the collimating microlens 104 and the focusing microlens 108, as shown. The reflective turning surface 111 can include a total internal reflecting surface. The optical fibers 102 can thereby be arranged to be parallel or nearly parallel to the photonic chip 112. The overall height can thus be greatly reduced. The reflective turning surface 111 may be a surface of the polarization splitting beam displacer 106' having a reflective coating. Alternatively, the polarization splitting beam displacer 106' may comprise two blocks joined with an angled surface that reflects the two polarization component beams at different angles, according to the difference in refractive index between two polarizations. Many types of polarization splitting beam displacers can be used that comprise birefringent elements, including for example, Glan-Taylor prism, Glan-Foucault prism, Glan-Thompson prism, Nicol prism, Nomarski prism, Wollaston prism, Senarmont prism, Rochon prism, etc. In addition to cube-type polarization

splitting beam displacers, polarization-dependent thin films can be used as well. Suitable turning surfaces can be used in combination with such polarization splitting beam displacers to separate the X and Y polarization component beams.

[0080] Although all the elements in the coupling apparatus may be reciprocal in that their behaviors are independent of the direction of light propagation, there may be spatial filtering and/or diffraction effects that can break the reciprocity when the elements are assembled in the coupling apparatus.

[0081] For example, when an input light beam impinges on the SGC 110a, 110b in FIG. 12, the input light induces the desired mode and other high-order modes in the photonic chip 112. An output light beam emitted from the SGC 110a, 110b is constructed from only the desired mode of the photonic chip 112, and thus the beam that it produces is not identical to the incident beam. Further, the microlens can clip a fraction of the light at the periphery of the beam. The optical configuration may therefore include SGCs 110a, 110b and microlenses 104, 108 that differ based on their intended direction of use. SGCs and microlenses may be manufactured using lithographic processes that permit each element to be different, and hence such non-uniform optical configurations can readily be manufactured. For example, for a channel where the light passes from the optical fiber 102 to the photonic chip 112, the microlens on the collimating microlens array 204 may be larger than the microlens on the focusing microlens array 208. For a channel where the light passes from the photonic chip 112 to the optical fiber 102, the microlens on the collimating microlens array 204 may be smaller than the microlens of the focusing microlens array 208. The method of optimizing the optical configuration may include analytical and numerical electromagnetic modeling techniques such as ray tracing, paraxial Gaussian beam analysis, and three-dimensional finite difference time domain calculations.

[0082] Most SGCs are configured for a spot size that matches the spot size of the optical fiber (e.g., about 10 μm diameter). However, the most difficult alignment step during manufacture is to align the beams at the SGCs. Thus, according to some embodiments of the disclosure, the spot size at the SGC 110a, 110b may be made larger than the spot size at the optical fiber 102. As a result, the alignment tolerance at the SGC 110a, 110b can be relaxed. As an example, SGC designed for approximately 25 μm beam diameter could be suitable for this purpose. The optical coupling apparatus can be arranged to provide such an imaging magnification.

[0083] FIG. 14 illustrates an optical coupling apparatus 400 with image magnifying, according to an embodiment of the disclosure. In this embodiment, FIG. 14 illustrates imaging of a Gaussian beam and about two times magnification of spot size at the SGC 110a, 110b compared to at the optical fiber 102. That is, the spot size at the SGC 110a, 110b is about two times the spot size at the optical fiber 102. The focal length of the microlens of the collimating microlens array 204 is f1 and the focal length of the microlens of the focusing microlens array 208 is f2 which equals approximately 2f1.

[0084] Referring to FIG. 14, the optical beam is shown by curves where the intensity of the light is 1/e<sup>2</sup>=14% of the intensity at the center of the beam. The spot size, or radius of curvature of the beam is at a minimum value at one place along the beam axis, known as the beam waist. In FIG. 14,



the beam waist of the collimated beam is illustrated by **134**, at the neck of the light in the polarization splitting beam displacer **106**. As illustrated in FIG. **14**, the beam waist **136** at the SGC **110a**, **110b** is larger than the beam waist at the optical fiber **102**. In this embodiment, the beam waist **136** at the SGC **110a**, **110b** is about two times the beam waist at the optical fiber **102**. Of course, the exact magnification depends on the required size of the beam waist **136** and may differ from the value of 2.

**[0085]** FIG. **15** illustrates an optical coupling apparatus **500** with image magnifying, according to an embodiment of the disclosure, showing a clipping effect.

**[0086]** The microlenses in the focusing microlens array **208** may be positioned close to each other in order to make the apparatus small, which may impose limitations on the size of the focusing microlens **108**. At the same time, a desired beam should be sufficiently big to propagate through the polarization splitting beam displacer **106** as a collimated beam. Accordingly, the edge of the beam may be clipped by the edge of the focusing microlens **108**.

**[0087]** The structure of the system in FIG. **15** is similar to that in FIG. **14** with the same focal lengths  $f_1$ ,  $f_2$  as in FIG. **14**. However, the diameter of the focusing microlens **108** is made smaller. As shown in FIG. **15**, the best position for the SGC **110a**, **110b** without clipping is at **109**. This is closer than the best position for the SGC **110a**, **110b** with clipping. At this position, the beam waist **136** at the SGC **110a**, **110b** is more than two times larger than the beam waist at the optical fiber **102**.

**[0088]** Gaussian beam clipping is described in G. D. Gillen, C. M. Seck, and S. Guha, "Analytical beam propagation model for clipped focused-Gaussian beams using vector diffraction theory," Opt. Exp., vol. 18, no. 5, pp. 4023-4040, 2010, incorporated herein by reference. General description of Gaussian beams can be found in, [http://www.rp-photonics.com/gaussian\\_beams.html](http://www.rp-photonics.com/gaussian_beams.html), and R. Paschotta, "Gaussian beams" in the Encyclopedia of Laser Physics and Technology, first edition October 2008, Wiley-VCH, ISBN 978-3-527-40828-3, also incorporated herein by reference.

**[0089]** FIG. **16** illustrates a method for coupling between the optical fiber **102** and the photonic chip **112**, according to an embodiment of the disclosure. Light from the optical fiber **102** is collimated (**1602**) and separated (**1604**) into orthogonally polarized X and Y component beams **105**, **107**. As discussed above, this can be done by a polarization splitting beam displacer **106**, **106'** of any suitable structure and material to achieve a spatial separation between the X, Y component beams **105**, **107**. The X, Y component beams **105**, **107** are directed (**1606**) separately to the photonic chip **112**, for example, either by a single focusing microlens **108**, or by two separate focusing microlenses **108a**, **108b** (i.e., first and second focusing microlenses). The X, Y component beams **105**, **107** are coupled (**1608**) to the photonic chip **112** by first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b**. As discussed above, the first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b** are orthogonally disposed on the photonic chip **112** and configured for operation in a same polarization mode (such as TE). As also discussed above, at least one of the X and Y component beams can be disposed off-axis with respect to the optical axis of the corresponding focusing microlens. The X, Y component beams **105**, **107** can thereby be directed separately onto the photonic chip **112** at coupling angles of the first and second SGCs **110a**, **110b**, respectively. A spot size

of light from the optical fiber **102** can be magnified through the optical coupling apparatus.

**[0090]** According to various embodiments of the disclosure, a dual polarization optical coupling apparatus can be provided by assembling an optical fiber array with off-chip PS/PC and single-polarization SGCs such as TE SGCs. The single-polarization SGCs can be oriented such that X and Y component beams each encounters only a single-polarization SGC. This is done using a polarization splitting beam displacer and a set of (or two interleaved sets of) off-axis microlenses to create a set of X component beams at one angle and a set of Y component beams at a different angle. The angles are aligned to the respective coupling angles of two interleaved sets of SGCs where all grating couplers are of the same polarization. The beams hit the microlenses off-axis laterally and/or vertically, so the coupling angles of X and Y gratings can be achieved.

**[0091]** According to one particular implementation, the collimated beam radius may be less than 25% of the diameter of the collimating/focusing microlens **104**, **108**, and has a Rayleigh range that is more than two times the thickness of the polarization splitting beam displacer **106**. The amount of optical power clipped by each microlens **104**, **108** can be less than 1%. The microlenses of the collimating microlens array **204** may be on a rectangular grid of  $127\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  by  $\sqrt{3}\times 127\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ . The microlenses for X component (X microlenses) in the focusing microlens array **208** can be arranged on the same grid. The microlenses for Y component (Y microlenses) in the focusing microlens array **208** can be on the same grid but offset laterally by  $127\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  and at 60 degrees diagonally from the X microlenses on a nearly hexagonal close-packed arrangement, as shown at **218** in FIG. **8**. This provides a close packing of the focusing microlens array **208**. Each beam can experience a two-time magnifying telescope, as discussed above. The beam radius (or spot size) at the optical fiber **102** can be around  $3\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  to  $4\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  and the beam radius (or spot size) at the SGC **110a**, **110b** can be around  $5\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  to  $8\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ , when the focal length of the focusing microlens **108** is around twice the focal length of the collimating microlens **104**. The alignment tolerance at the SGC **110a**, **110b** is proportional to the beam radius (or spot size) at the SGC. Therefore, the alignment tolerance at the SGC **110a**, **110b** may be increased by the magnification of the beam radius, and the apparatus may be easier to assemble than an apparatus that lacks this magnification.

**[0092]** By way of the optical coupling apparatus described, a large number of optical fibers can be coupled to a photonic chip with polarization diversity.

**[0093]** According to various embodiments, both polarization component beams can be handled with the same polarization gratings. In theory, TE SGCs and TM SGCs can be made on the same photonic chip. However, the coupling angle reacts to manufacturing variations differently for TE SGCs and TM SGCs. Therefore, it may be difficult to yield both with the same coupling angle. Further, the manufacturing process for the best TE SGC is not generally the same as for the best TM SGC, so the performance of one or both will be compromised. Accordingly, a photonic chip that uses only one SGC polarization will have a better performance and a higher yield than a chip that requires both SGC polarizations.

**[0094]** Off-chip PS/PC have been manufactured with high performance. By way of the dual polarization optical coupling apparatus provided according to various embodiments



of the disclosure, the cost and size of the off-chip PS/PC can be shared across many channels, so the cost and size per channel can be small. Further, the off-chip PS/PC is assembled within the optical coupling apparatus simply as a face-to-face alignment of two polished surfaces, which can be achieved by an inexpensive assembly process.

**[0095]** In principle, the dual polarization optical coupling apparatus according to the various embodiments of the disclosure may enable a low cost and a low loss assembly for a large fiber count on a photonic chip with polarization diversity. Because it is grating coupled, re-entrant routing can be used so the waveguides of X component do not need to cross the waveguides of Y component. A microlens imaging system can provide a larger beam, e.g. two times bigger beam at the photonic chip than at the optical fiber, reducing alignment tolerance by two times and also reducing cost.

**[0096]** The optical coupling apparatus according to various embodiments may be used for reconfigurable fiber optic communications, particularly for optical add/drop wavelength-division multiplexing (WDM) applications in metro optical networks, WDM passive optical network (PON), wireless aggregation network/Cloud-radio access network (C-RAN), and may be used for reconfigurable data center networks and high-performance computing, data center transceivers, data center core switching network, or coherent optical transceivers in Metro and Long Haul.

**[0097]** While several embodiments have been provided in the present disclosure, it should be understood that the disclosed systems and methods might be embodied in many other specific forms without departing from the spirit or scope of the present disclosure. The present examples are to be considered as illustrative and not restrictive, and the intention is not to be limited to the details given herein. For example, the various elements or components may be combined or integrated in another system or certain features may be omitted, or not implemented.

**[0098]** In addition, techniques, systems, subsystems, and methods described and illustrated in the various embodiments as discrete or separate may be combined or integrated with other systems, modules, techniques, or methods without departing from the scope of the present disclosure. Other items shown or discussed as coupled or directly coupled or communicating with each other may be indirectly coupled or communicating through some interface, device, or intermediate component whether electrically, mechanically, or otherwise. Other examples of changes, substitutions, and alterations are ascertainable by one skilled in the art and could be made without departing from the spirit and scope disclosed herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for coupling light between an optical fiber and a photonic chip, comprising:

- collimating or re-focusing light from the optical fiber;
- separating the light into orthogonally polarized X and Y component beams;
- directing the X and Y component beams to separate first and second locations, respectively, on the photonic chip; and
- coupling the X and Y component beams to the photonic chip respectively by first and second surface grating couplers (SGCs) orthogonally disposed on the photonic

chip at the first and second locations, respectively, and configured for coupling a same polarization mode to the photonic chip.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein directing the X and Y component beams separately onto the photonic chip comprises directing the X and Y component beams by first and second focusing microlenses, respectively, wherein at least one of the first and second focusing microlenses is disposed off-axis with respect to the X and Y component beams.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein coupling the X and Y component beams to the photonic chip comprises coupling X and Y component beams onto the photonic chip at coupling angles of the first and second SGCs, respectively.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising magnifying a spot size of light from the optical fiber.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein a spot size of at least one of the X and Y component beams at the photonic chip is larger than a spot size at the optical fiber.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the coupling of light between the optical fiber and the photonic chip is absent rotating polarization of any of the component beams.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the collimating or re-focusing comprises collimating, and wherein the separating is performed after the collimating.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the optical fiber is disposed substantially parallel to the photonic chip, the method further comprising reflecting the light exiting the optical fiber to propagate towards the photonic chip.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein at least two of the collimating, the separating, and the directing is performed by a same optical element.

10. A method for coupling light between a photonic chip and an optical fiber, comprising:

- emitting X and Y component beams by first and second surface grating couplers (SGCs), respectively, wherein the first and second SGCs are orthogonally disposed on the photonic chip at the first and second locations and are configured for coupling a same polarization mode from the photonic chip;

combining the X and Y component beams into a beam of light; and

re-focusing the beam of light onto the optical fiber.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the coupling of light between the optical fiber and the photonic chip is absent rotating polarization of any of the component beams.

12. An apparatus for coupling light between an optical fiber and a photonic chip, the apparatus comprising:

- a collimator for collimating or re-focusing light from the optical fiber;
- a beam separator for separating the light into orthogonally polarized X and Y component beams;
- a beam director for directing the X and Y component beams to separate first and second locations, respectively, on the photonic chip, wherein the beam director is configured for coupling the X and Y component beams to the photonic chip respectively by first and second surface grating couplers (SGCs) orthogonally disposed on the photonic chip at the first and second locations, respectively, and for coupling a same polarization mode to the photonic chip.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein at least two of the collimator, the beam separator, and the beam director comprise a same optical element.

**14.** The apparatus of claim **12**, wherein the optical fiber, the collimator, and the beam separator comprise a first subassembly, and the beam director and the photonic chip comprise a second subassembly.

**15.** The apparatus of claim **12**, wherein the collimator comprises a microlens.

**16.** The apparatus of claim **12**, wherein the collimator and the beam director comprise a microlens.

**17.** The apparatus of claim **12**, wherein the beam separator comprises a polarization beam displacer.

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