

projecting therefrom into a high-speed stream of suitable coolant.

Although the process according to this invention is particularly suited to using external electrical energy, it must be understood that other sources can be used to provide the initial energy input, e.g. solar and waste-processed heat are some of the varied energy sources which could be utilised. Control of the charge-generation process can be achieved by other means, including one or more electrically-biased grids, as used in thermionic valves.

I claim:

1. An energy conversion process for generating an electric potential, the process comprising; providing a source of electric charge carriers of predetermined polarity, accelerating the carriers away from the source, introducing the carriers into a magnetic field transverse to the path of the carriers in a process chamber, the field bounding an inner electrode within the chamber such that the carriers orbit the electrode while accelerating radially toward the electrode; and converting the resulting increased kinetic energy of the carriers into an electric potential at the electrode before the carriers reach an orbit of equilibrium in which the centripetal force is balanced by the centrifugal force on the carriers.

2. A process according to claim 1 in which the electric potential is created between the inner electrode and an outer electrode radially spaced from the inner electrode.

3. A process according to claim 2 in which the outer electrode provides the said source of the charge carriers.

4. A process according to claim 1 or claim 2 in which the chamber is maintained at a sub-atmospheric pressure.

5. A process according to claim 1 in which the electric potential drives a load connected between the inner electrode and a point remote from the electrode.

6. A process according to claim 1 or claim 2 in which the electric charge carriers comprise electrons or ions.

7. A process according to claim 1 in which further charge carriers of the opposite polarity traverse the magnetic field and accumulate at a second electrode to increase the potential difference between the two electrodes.

8. A process according to claim 1 in which electrically biased grids control the flow of the charge carriers from the source.

9. A process according to claim 1 in which the charge carriers are separated from charge carriers of the opposite polarity before being introduced into the magnetic field.

10. A process according to claim 9 in which the charge carriers of opposite polarity are introduced into a corresponding second magnetic field, whereby a potential difference is produced between respective electrodes in each field.

11. A process according to claim 1 in which the carriers are injected into the magnetic field.

12. A process according to claim 11 in which the injection energy is produced by accelerating the carriers through an electric field.

13. A process according to claim 11 in which the injection energy is produced by accelerating the carriers through a magnetic field.

14. A process according to claim 1 in which the injection energy of the carriers is produced by nuclear emission.

15. A process according to claim 1 in which the injection energy of the carriers is produced by heat.

16. A process according to claim 1 in which the generated electric potential is directly or indirectly used to maintain the generation of charge carriers or the internal temperature of the space traversed by the magnetic field, or the applied magnetic field.

17. A process according to claim 1 in which the generated electric potential is directly or indirectly used to maintain the generation of charge carriers and the internal temperature of the space traversed by the magnetic field and the applied magnetic field.

18. An energy converter including a source of electric charge carriers of a predetermined polarity, a process chamber having an inner electrode, means for accelerating the carriers away from the source and for introducing the carriers into the chamber, means for applying a magnetic field transverse to the path of the carriers and bounding the inner electrode of the chamber such that the carriers orbit the electrode while accelerating radially toward the electrode, the electrode being located at a radius which exceeds the equilibrium radius for the carrier mean velocity and applied field strength and intercepting the carriers such that the increased kinetic energy of the carriers due to centripetal acceleration is converted to an electric potential at the electrode.

19. An energy converter according to claim 18 in which the chamber includes an outer electrode spaced radially from the inner electrode, and means for injecting the charge carriers into the space between the electrodes.

20. An energy converter according to claim 19 in which the outer electrode provides the said source of charge carriers.

21. An energy converter according to claim 19 further comprising an insulating wall bounding the outer electrode.

22. A converter according to claim 18 further comprising means for maintaining the chamber at a predetermined sub-atmospheric pressure.

23. A converter according to claim 19 in which the outer electrode has at least one port through which the charge carriers can be injected into the chamber along a desired trajectory.

24. A converter according to claim 23 in which the outer electrode has plural ports and each port communicates with a thermionic source of the respective carriers.

25. A converter according to claim 18 in which the chamber is a vacuum chamber.

26. A converter according to claim 18 further comprising electrically biased grids for controlling the flow of charge carriers from the source.

27. A converter according to claim 22 or claim 25 in which the evacuated chamber comprises a sealed unit.

28. A converter according to claim 18 further comprising means for adjusting the strength of the applied magnetic field.

29. A converter according to claim 18 in which the chamber is filled with low pressure gas.

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