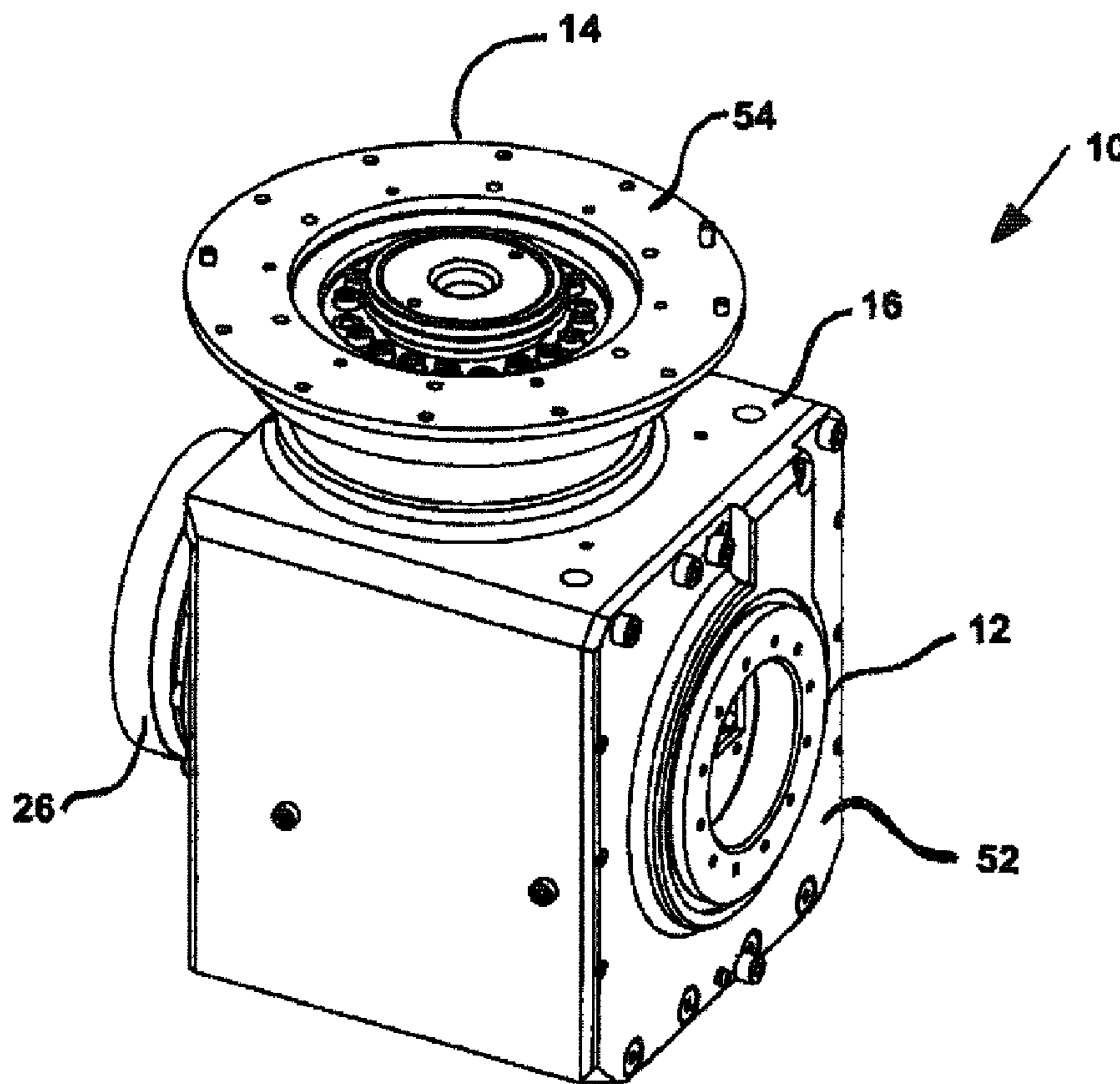




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(54) **Titre : MODULE A DEUX JOINTS**
 (54) **Title: TWO JOINT MODULE**



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A two joint module includes a module housing, a first joint and a second joint. The module housing has a structural support portion. The first joint has a first motor and a first motor axis and a first joint axis. The second joint has a second motor and a second motor axis and a second joint axis. The second joint axis is not parallel to the first joint axis. The first joint is attached to the structural support portion and the second joint is attached to the structural support portion.



ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A two joint module includes a module housing, a first joint and a second joint. The module housing has a structural support portion. The first joint has a first motor and a first motor axis and a first joint axis. The second joint has a second motor and a second motor axis and a second joint axis. The second joint axis is not parallel to the first joint axis. The first joint is attached to the structural support portion and the second joint is attached to the structural support portion.

TWO JOINT MODULE

FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE

This disclosure relates to robotic joints and in particular to a two joint module or a two degree of freedom robotic joint.

5

BACKGROUND

Robot joints used in robotic arms are well known. However, when joints and arms are to be used in certain applications constraints are introduced in the specifications that are not generally present in general applications. For example the payload to weight ratio is very important in space and planetary applications and mobile robot applications. As well, size constraints may be very important in manufacturing and mobile robot applications. Any design of modern robot needs to consider: low weight, high payload, long reach, kinematic dexterity, high accuracy and repeatability, and low cost.

15 Accordingly most of the above considerations can be addressed by the combination of two joints in a single module which would be advantageous over separate first joint and second joints. A combination two joint module may provide advantages in regard to a compact size, low weight, high payload, and high accuracy and repeatability.

20

SUMMARY

A two joint module includes a module housing, a first joint and a second joint. The module housing has a structural support portion. The first joint has a first
5 motor and a first motor axis and a first joint axis. The second joint has a second motor and a second motor axis and a second joint axis. The second joint axis is at an angle to the first joint axis. The first joint is attached to the structural support portion and the second joint is attached to the structural support portion.

The first joint may be a pitch joint. The second joint may be one of a roll
10 joint and a yaw joint. The second joint may be a prismatic joint.

The second motor may be perpendicular to the second joint axis. The first motor axis and the first axis may be parallel.

Each joint may include a gearhead and a drive operably attached to the respective motor. The drive may be a harmonic drive. Each motor may include
15 absolute encoders and incremental encoders. Each motor may be capable of measuring speed and current. The two joint module may include torque sensors. Each joint of the two joint module may be a low power, high torque joint.

One of the first and second motor may include angled gearing such the second joint axis is at an angle to the first joint axis. The first joint axis may be
20 orthogonal or at right angles to the second joint axis. The right angle gearing may be one of a worm gear and a hypoid gear.

The module housing may act as an electromagnetic shield. The module

housing may include a module housing box and each motor may be external to the module housing box. The module housing may include motor housing.

The first joint and second joint may be configured to be reversible.

Each motor may be operably connected to cables that are internal to the
5 module housing. One of the first joint and second joint may have an active side and a passive side of the housing and the other of the first joint and second joint may have a hollow central axis and the cables may pass through the passive side of the housing of one joint and the hollow central axis of the other joint.

A two joint module includes a module housing, a first joint and a second
10 joint. The first joint has a passive side and an active side and has a first motor. The second joint has a hollow central axis and an off axis drive and has a second motor. Internal cabling runs through the passive side of the first joint and through the hollow central axis of the second joint.

Each joint may include electronics and the electronics are capable of
15 being connected in series and the cables are operably connected to the electronics and operably connected to the motors.

The first motor and gearhead may be a combination motor and gearhead. The harmonic drive may be internal to the combination motor and gearhead.

Further features will be described or will become apparent in the course
20 of the following detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The embodiments will now be described by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

5 Fig. 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a two joint module which may be used as a wrist joint;

Fig. 2 is a blown apart view of the two joint module of figure 2

Fig. 3 is cross sectional view of the two joint module of figure 2 taken along line 3-3

10 Fig. 4 is a cross sectional view of the two joint module of figure 2 taken along line 4-4;

Fig. 5 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a two joint module which may be used as an elbow joint;

15 Fig. 6 is perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a two joint module which may be used as a shoulder joint;

Fig 7 perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a two joint module similar to that show in figure 6 but also including a fork connector;

Fig. 8 is a perspective view of an arm assembly including the two degree of freedom joins shown in figures 1, 5 and 7;

20 Fig. 9 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of a two joint module;

Fig. 10 is a top view of the two joint module of figure 9;

Fig. 11 is a side view of the two joint module of figure 9;

Fig. 12 is a front view of the two joint module of figure 9;

Fig. 13 is a blown apart view of the two joint module of figure 9;

Fig. 14 is a cross sectional view of the two joint module of figure 9;

5 Fig. 15 is a blown apart view of a two joint module which includes a roll joint and a prismatic joint;

Fig. 16 is a perspective view of an arm including the two joint modules of figures 9 and 15; and

Fig. 17 is a perspective blown apart view of the arm of figure 16.

10

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to figures 1 to 4, a two joint module is shown generally at 10.

Module 10 includes a first joint 12, a second joint 14 and a module housing 16. The first joint 12 has a first joint axis 28 and the second joint 14 has a second joint axis 46 and the first axis 28 is generally orthogonal to the second axis 46. However, the angle between the two joints need not be orthogonal rather it could be at another angle depending on the design constraints. Typically the first joint is a pitch joint and the second joint is a roll joint or yaw joint.

20 The first joint 12 includes a first motor 18, a first gearhead 20 and a first drive 22. By way of example the first drive 22 is a harmonic drive. The first motor 20 and first gearhead 18 may be incorporated in the same unit 24 as shown herein. The first motor and gearhead may also include an incremental encoder. The motor

gearhead is a speed reducer to reduce the power required to operate the first module. The gearhead has a reduction ratio of 20584:1. The use of the gearhead provides for the option to use smaller, lighter and lower power motors. The incremental encoder measures relative rotational position of the motor and in turn by determining the rate of change of the rotational position the speed of the motor is determined. The position of the motor is determined prior to the gearhead. The first drive 22 may include an integrated torque sensor which measures the output torque that is applied after all of the gearing. The first joint also includes an absolute encoder 26 which determines the rotational position of the output after all of the gears. The absolute encoder is used to determine the relative rotational position of the outer link with respect to the inner link.

The first joint 12 has a first motor axis and a first joint axis 28. The first motor 20, first gearhead 18, first drive 22 and first absolute encoder 26 are concentric with the first joint axis 28.

The second joint 14 includes a second motor 32, a second gearhead 30 and a second drive 34. The second motor or drive 34 may be a harmonic drive. The second motor 32 and second gearhead 30 may be incorporated in the same unit 36 as shown herein. The second motor and gearhead may also include an incremental encoder. The incremental encoder measures relative rotational position of the motor and from the rate of change of the relative rotational position the speed of the motor is determined. The position of the motor is determined prior to the gearhead. The second drive 34 may include an integrated torque sensor which measures the output torque that is applied after all of the gearing. The second joint also includes an

absolute encoder 38 which determines the rotational position of the output after all of the gears. The absolute encoder is used to determine the rotational position of the link.

The second joint 14 includes a hollow drive shaft 40 and angled gearing that allows for internal cabling 41. A worm gear 42 and worm 44 connect the second motor and gearhead combination 36 to the drive shaft 40. This allows the second motor 32, the second motor axis and gearhead combination 36 to be positioned at an angle to the second joint axis 46. The angle may be perpendicular but it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the different angles may be chosen depending on the design constraints for the joint. The positioning of the motor and gearhead combination 36 in this fashion allows for a compact two joint module.

The second joint 14 has a second joint axis 46. The second drive 34, second absolute encoder 38 and hollow drive shaft 40 are concentric with the second axis 46. The second drive 34 may be a harmonic drive. The second drive 34, second motor axis and gearhead combination 36 are perpendicular to second joint axis 46. The second motor axis of the second motor and gearhead combination 36 is parallel to the first motor axis of the first motor and gearhead combination 24.

Electronic modules 48 are operably connected to each of the first joint 12 and the second joint 14. The electronic modules 48 are operably connected to a control unit (not shown). The electronic modules 48 receive information from the control unit in regard to the desired movement of the joint and control the first motor 18 and second motor 30 accordingly. Each electronic module 48 includes a torque sensor amplifier to increase strength of the output signal from the torque sensors. Each

electronic module 48 includes interfaces for all of the sensors such as the incremental encoders, absolute encoder, and output from torque sensor amplifier, and is capable of digitizing all sensor information. Each electronic module 48 includes power connections.

5 The module housing 16 includes a first housing cover with electronic connections 52. A first output plate 50 is operably attached to the output of the first drive 50. The output plate 50 is adapted for mechanical external connections and is movable relative to the module housing 16 and output plate 50 is the active side of the housing. The first housing cover 52 with electronic connections 53 is for the joint
10 modules interfaces for power and communications and is used for positioning the link which is attached to the module 10 and first housing cover is the passive side of the housing. The second joint 14 has a combined second output plate 54 and electronic connections 55. The active first output plate 50, passive first housing cover with electronic connections 52 and the second output plate, together with the hollow drive
15 shaft 40 of the second joint 14 allows for internal cabling. However it will be appreciated that the first joint could have a hollow drive shaft and the second joint could have an active and a passive side. The module housing 16 also includes a housing box 56. The module housing box 56 is robust enough to transmit forces and torques and the module housing box is a structural support portion and first joint 12 and second joint
20 14 are attached thereto. As well, the module housing 16 enclosures the electronics and motors and protects them from external environment. The module housing 16 acts as an electromagnetic shield. The module housing 16 is made from metal and is

conductive. The electronics modules 48 are enclosed by the housing 16. The housing 16 provides electromagnetic shielding.

The embodiments of the two joint module 10 shown in figures 1 to 4 are for a small relative to the other joints shown in arm 70 in figure 8. and joint module 10
 5 may be used as a wrist module. Figure 5 shows a medium sized embodiment of a two joint module 60 which is similar to that shown in figures 1 to 4 but is somewhat larger and may be used as an elbow module. Since the elbow joint 60 has a greater distance from the payload, the elbow joint 60 is required to generate greater torques and thus requires larger motors and drives. Figure 6 show a larger sized embodiment of a two
 10 joint module 62 that is similar to modules 10 and 60 but larger and may be used as a shoulder module. Figure 7 is a larger module similar to that shown in figure 6 but further including a fork connector 64. Joint module 62 includes larger motors and drives than those of modules 10 and 60 and can generate higher torques. The electronics are configured so that the joint described herein with internal cabling are
 15 capable of being connected in series.

By way of example only the chart below shows the torques that can be generated by the specific joints shown herein. It will be appreciated that the motor size and gear ratios can be varied to achieve the specific torque that is required for a specific application.

JOINT	MOTOR POWER (W)	GEAR RATIO	TORQUE
Module 62			

Shoulder First Joint	50	35652:1	826
Shoulder Second Joint	25	39243:1	367
Module 60			
Elbow First Joint	25	37226:1	334
Elbow Second Joint	5	23085:1	71
Module 10			
Wrist First Joint	5	20584:1	65
Wrist Second Joint	5	21309:1	42

As is well known in the art, joints are typically used in conjunctions with links to form a robot arm. The configuration of each robot arm can vary greatly depending on the design specifications which typically include such things as reach, weight of payload to weight of arm, operational environment, dexterity, human machine interfaces, accuracy and repeatability, and control methods. An example of an arm which uses the joint modules of figures 1 to 7 is shown in figure 8. Arm 70 includes two joint module 10 as the wrist, two joint module 60 as the elbow and two joint module 62 with fork connector 64 as the shoulder. The modules are connected with links 72. As can be seen from the drawing one advantage of these joints is that there is no external cabling. This is advantageous as it reduces the risk of the cabling getting caught on some unknown projection. Note that in the embodiments shown in figures 1 to 8 the joints have internal cabling. As described above, since the housing 16 provides

electromagnetic shielding the cables can be lighter and more bendable since the cables do not need to include shielding or shielded connectors.

The modules can be used with links 72 to form a multi degrees of freedom robotic arm 70. One embodiment of the arm 70 has six degrees of freedom and a reach of 2250 mm. The arm has a mass of 38kg and a payload capacity of 20kg. The arm consists of a fork connector 64, shoulder module 62, lower link 72, elbow module 60, upper link 72 and a wrist module 10.

Referring to figures 9 to 16, a two joint module is shown generally at 80. Module 80 includes a first joint 82, a second joint 84 and a module housing 86.

The first joint 82 includes a first motor 88, a first gearhead 90 and a first drive 92. By way of example the first drive may be a harmonic drive. The first motor 88 and first gearhead 90 may be incorporated in the same unit 94 as shown herein. The first motor and gearhead may also include an incremental encoder 91. The incremental encoder 91 measures relative rotational position of the motor and from the rate of change of the relative rotational position the speed of the motor is determined. The position of the motor is determined prior to the gearhead. The first joint also includes an absolute encoder 96 which determines the rotational position of the output after all of the gears. The absolute encoder is used to determine the position of the link.

The first joint 82 has a first joint axis 98. The first motor 88, first gearhead 90, first incremental encoder 91, first drive 92 and first absolute encoder 96 are concentric with the first axis 98. The first motor 88 has a first motor axis.

The second joint 84 includes a second motor 100, a second gearhead 102, a second incremental encoder 103 and a second drive 104. The second drive or motor 104 may be a harmonic drive. The second motor 100, second gearhead 102 and second incremental encoder 103 may be incorporated in the same unit 106 as
5 shown herein. The incremental encoder 103 measures relative rotational position of the motor and from the rate of change of the relative rotational position the speed of the motor is determined. The position of the motor is determined prior to the gearhead. The second joint also includes an absolute encoder 108 which determines the rotational position of the output after all of the gears. The absolute encoder is used to
10 determine the position of the link. A worm gear 112 connects the second motor, gearhead and incremental encoder combination 106 to the second drive 104. This allows the motor and gearhead combination 106 to be positioned perpendicular to the second joint axis 114. The positioning of the motor and gearhead combination 106 in this fashion allows for a compact two joint module.

15 The second joint 84 has a second axis 114. The second drive or motor 104 has a second motor axis. The second drive 104 and second absolute encoder 108 are concentric with the second axis 114. The second motor, gearhead and incremental encoder combination 106 are perpendicular to second axis 114. The second axis of the second motor, gearhead and incremental encoder combination 106 is parallel to the
20 first axis of the first motor, gearhead and incremental encoder combination 98.

Electronic modules are operably connected to for each of the first joint 82 and the second joint 84. The electronic modules are located in a control unit (not

shown). The electronic modules transmit information in regard to the movement of the joint and control the first motor 88 and second motor 100 accordingly. Each electronic module includes interfaces for all of the sensors such as the incremental encoders, absolute encoder, and output from torque sensor amplifier, and is capable of digitizes
5 all sensor information. Each electronic module includes power connections.

The module housing 86 includes first output plate 120 and a second output plate 122. The first output plate 120 and second output plate 122 are adapted for mechanical external connections. The module housing 86 also includes a housing box 124. The housing box 124 acts as a structural support portion and first joint 82 and
10 second joint 84 are attached thereto. The module housing 86 also includes a first motor cover 126 and a second motor cover 128. The first motor cover 126 also includes and external electronic connector 129. The module housing 86 is robust enough to transmit forces and torques. As well, the module housing 86 encloses the electronics and motors and protects them from external environment. The module housing 86 acts as
15 an electromagnetic shield. The module housing 16 is made from metal and is conductive. The electronics modules 48 are enclosed by the housing 16. The housing 16 provides electromagnetic shielding.

Module 80 is different from those described above in that it is designed for external cabling (not shown).

20 Two joint module 80 may be used as part of a robotic arm 130 as shown in figures 15 and 16. Module 80 is used herein as a wrist module. Module 80 may be modified to be used as an elbow module 132. As well, module 80 may be scaled up to

accommodate different loads.

Elbow module 132 is a two joint module that includes a first joint and a prismatic or linear joint. Module 132 is used herein as an elbow module. Module 132 is an alternative implementation of a two joints. Module 132 may be modified to be used
5 as a wrist module 80 or a shoulder module 134. The first joint of module 132 may be modified and implemented as the first joint in combination with a second joint. A prismatic or linear joint of module 132 may be modified and implemented with second joint. Module 132 shares a common structural element in which both the first joint and the prismatic are attached.

10 More specifically two joint module 132 includes a first joint 138 and a linear or prismatic joint 140. The first joint 138 includes a first motor 142, a first gearhead 144 and a first drive 146. By way of example the first drive 146 may be a harmonic drive. The first motor 138 and first gearhead 140 may be incorporated in the same unit 148 as shown herein. The first motor and gearhead may also include an
15 incremental encoder 150. The incremental encoder 150 measures relative rotational position of the motor and from the rate of change of the relative rotational position the speed of the motor is determined. The position of the motor is determined prior to the gearhead. The first joint also includes an absolute encoder 152 which determines the rotational position of the output after all of the gears. The absolute encoder is used to
20 determine the position of the link.

The first joint 138 has a first axis 154. The first motor 142, first gearhead 144, first incremental encoder 150, first drive 146 and first absolute encoder 152 are

concentric with the pitch axis 154.

The second joint 140 is a linear or prismatic joint includes a second motor 156, a second linear actuator 158. The second joint 140 has a second axis 160. The second motor 156 and second linear actuator 158 are concentric with the second axis
5 160.

The module housing includes a module base 162 and the first joint 138 and second joint 140 are attached thereto. The module housing further includes a first motor cover 164, a second motor cover 166 and an actuator cover 168 all of which include electromagnetic shielding. An external cable guide 170 is attached to first
10 motor cover 166. External electronic connectors 172 are attached to the external cable guide 170, first motor cover and second motor cover. The external electronic connectors 172 are operably connected to the first joint 138 and the second joint 140.

The two joint modules 80 and 132 may be used in robotic arms. An example of a robotic arm 130 is shown in figures 16 and 17. The modules can be used
15 with a link 136 to form a multi degrees of freedom robotic arm 130. One embodiment of the arm 130 has six degrees of freedom and a reach of 1130mm. The arm has a mass of 20kg and a payload capacity of 20kg. The arm consists of a turret joint 134, a shoulder joint 135, a link 136, an elbow and prismatic module 132 and a wrist module 80.

20 By way of example only the chart below shows the torques that can be generated by the specific joints shown herein. It will be appreciated that the motor size and gear ratios can be varied to achieve the specific torque that is required for a

specific application.

JOINT	MOTOR POWER (W)	GEAR RATIO	TORQUE (NM)
Turret - 134	12	38400:1	73
Shoulder - 135	25	59200:1	258
Elbow Module 132			
Elbow First Joint	12	50560:1	123
Elbow Second Linear Joint	4.8	not applicable	200N
Module 80			
Wrist First Joint	12	20480:1	33
Wrist Second Joint	15	38000:1	20

The elbow module 132 and shoulder module 135 may be connected with
5 a link 136.

Generally speaking, the systems described herein are directed to two
joint modules. As required, specific embodiments are disclosed herein. However, the
disclosed embodiments are merely exemplary, and it should be understood that the
disclosure may be embodied in many various and alternative forms. The Figures are
10 not to scale and some features may be exaggerated or minimized to show details of
particular elements while related elements may have been eliminated to prevent
obscuring novel aspects. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed

herein are not to be interpreted as limiting but merely as a basis for the claims and as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to variously employ the present disclosure. For purposes of teaching and not limitation, the illustrated embodiments are directed to two joint modules.

5 As used herein, the terms “comprises” and “comprising” are to construed as being inclusive and opened rather than exclusive. Specifically, when used in this specification including the claims, the terms “comprises” and “comprising” and variations thereof mean that the specified features, steps or components are included. The terms are not to be interpreted to exclude the presence of other features, steps or
10 components.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A two joint module comprising;
 - a module housing having a structural support portion;
 - a first joint having a first motor, a first motor axis, a first joint axis a passive side and an active side;
 - a second joint having a second motor, a second motor axis, a second joint axis which is hollow and an off axis drive;
 - internal cabling runs through the centre of the passive side of the first joint, which coincides with the first joint axis and through the hollow second joint axis of the second joint; and
 - wherein the first joint and the second joint form one single module, with each joint attached to the structural support portion of the same module housing.
2. The two joint module of claim 1 wherein the first joint axis is orthogonal to the second joint axis.
3. The two joint module of claims 1 or 2 wherein the first joint is a pitch joint.
4. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the second joint is one of a roll joint and a yaw joint.
5. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the second joint is a

prismatic joint.

6. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein one of the first and second joints has motor axis that is at an angle to its joint axis.
7. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein one of the first and second joints has a motor axis that is orthogonal to its joint axis.
8. The two joint module of claim 7 wherein the other of the first and second joints has a motor axis that is parallel to its joint axis.
9. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 8 wherein the first motor axis and second motor axis are parallel.
10. The two joint module of claim 1 wherein each joint further includes a gearhead and a drive operably attached to the motor.
11. The two joint module of claim 10 wherein the drive is a harmonic drive.
12. The two joint module of claims 10 or 11 wherein the first motor and the gearhead is a combination motor and gearhead.

13. The two joint module of claim 12 wherein the drive is internal to the combination motor and gearhead.

14. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 13 wherein each motor is operably connected to cables that are internal to the module housing.

15. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 14 wherein each joint further includes electronics and the electronics are capable of being connected in series and the cables are operably connected to the electronics and operably connected to the motors.

16. The two joint module of any one of claims 10 to 15 wherein each motor further includes absolute encoders and incremental encoders.

17. The two joint module of claim 16 wherein the incremental encoders measure speed of the motor, and current is measured in the drive.

18. The two joint module of claim 17 further includes torque sensors.

19. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 18 wherein each joint is a low power, high torque joint.

20. The two joint module of claim 19 wherein power of the joint is in a range between 5 and 50 W and torque of the joint is in a range between 20 and 826 N/m.
21. The two joint module of claim 6 wherein one of the first motor and second motor is connected to angle gearing.
22. The two joint module of claim 21 wherein the angle gearing is right angle gearing.
23. The two joint module of claim 22 wherein the right angle gearing is one of a worm gear and a hypoid gear.
24. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 23 wherein the module housing acts as an electromagnetic shield.
25. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 24 wherein the module housing includes a module housing box and each motor is external to the module housing box.
26. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 25 wherein the module housing further includes a motor housing.
27. The two joint module of any one of claims 1 to 26 wherein the first joint and second joint are configured to be reversible.

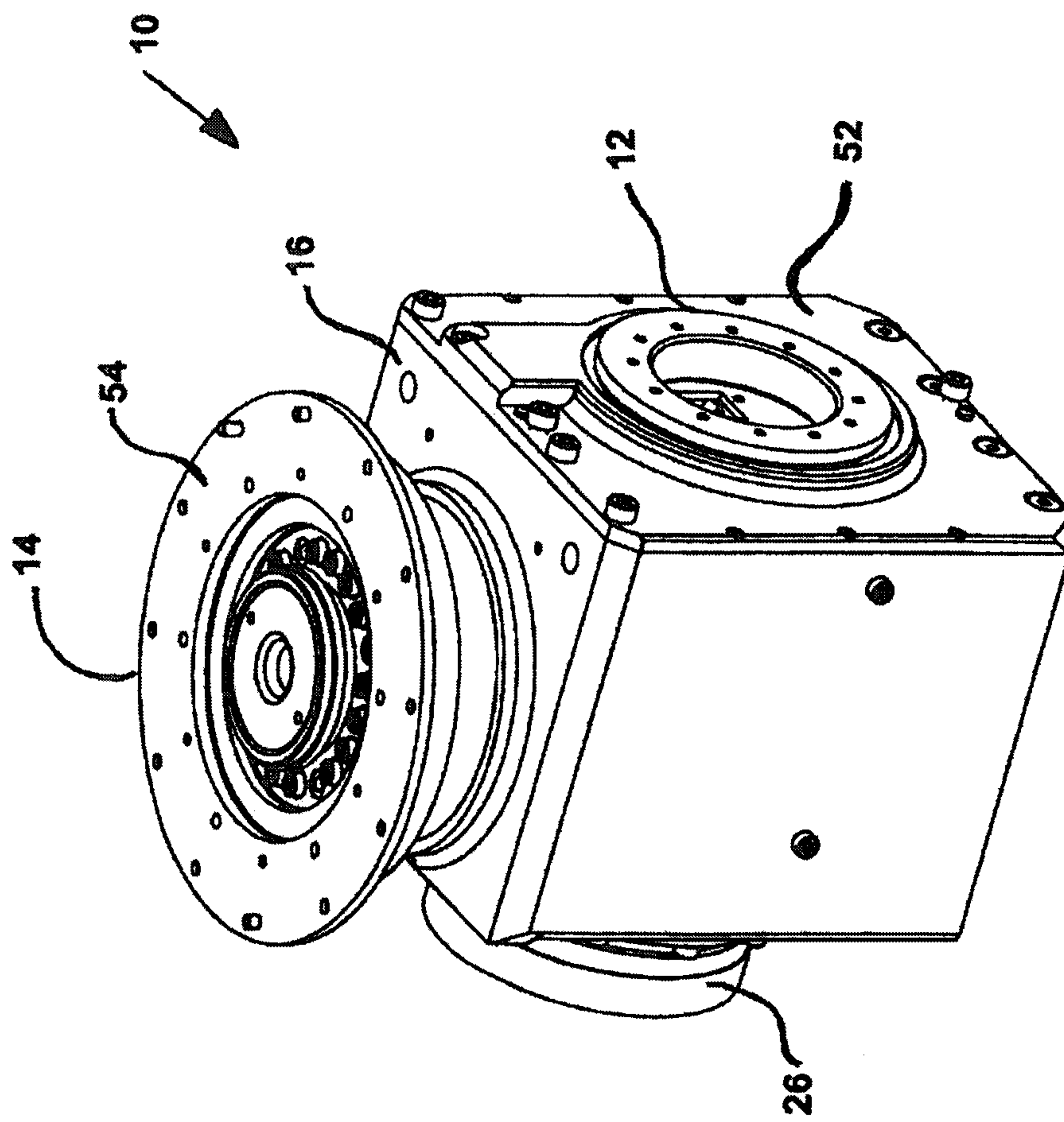


FIG. 1

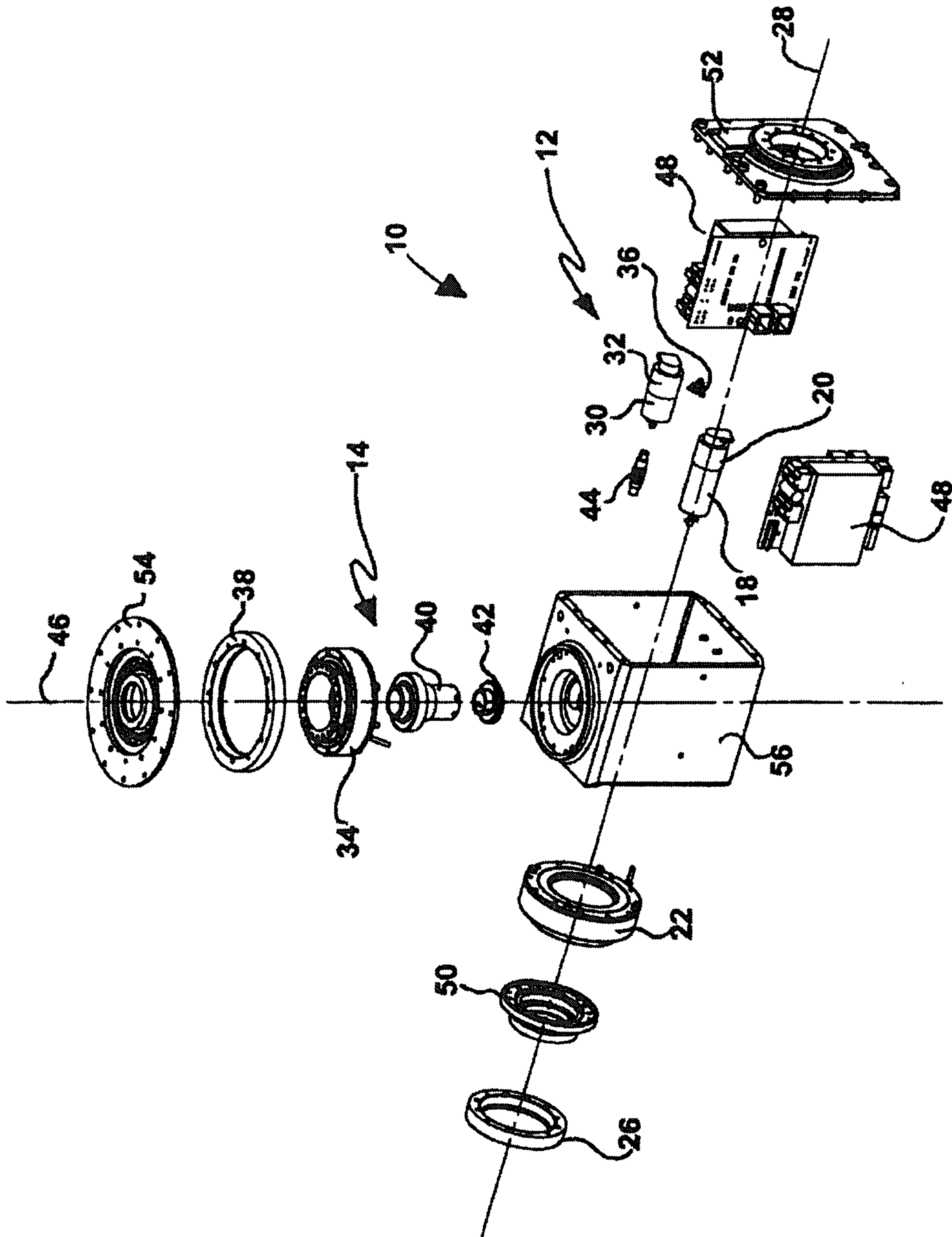


FIG. 2

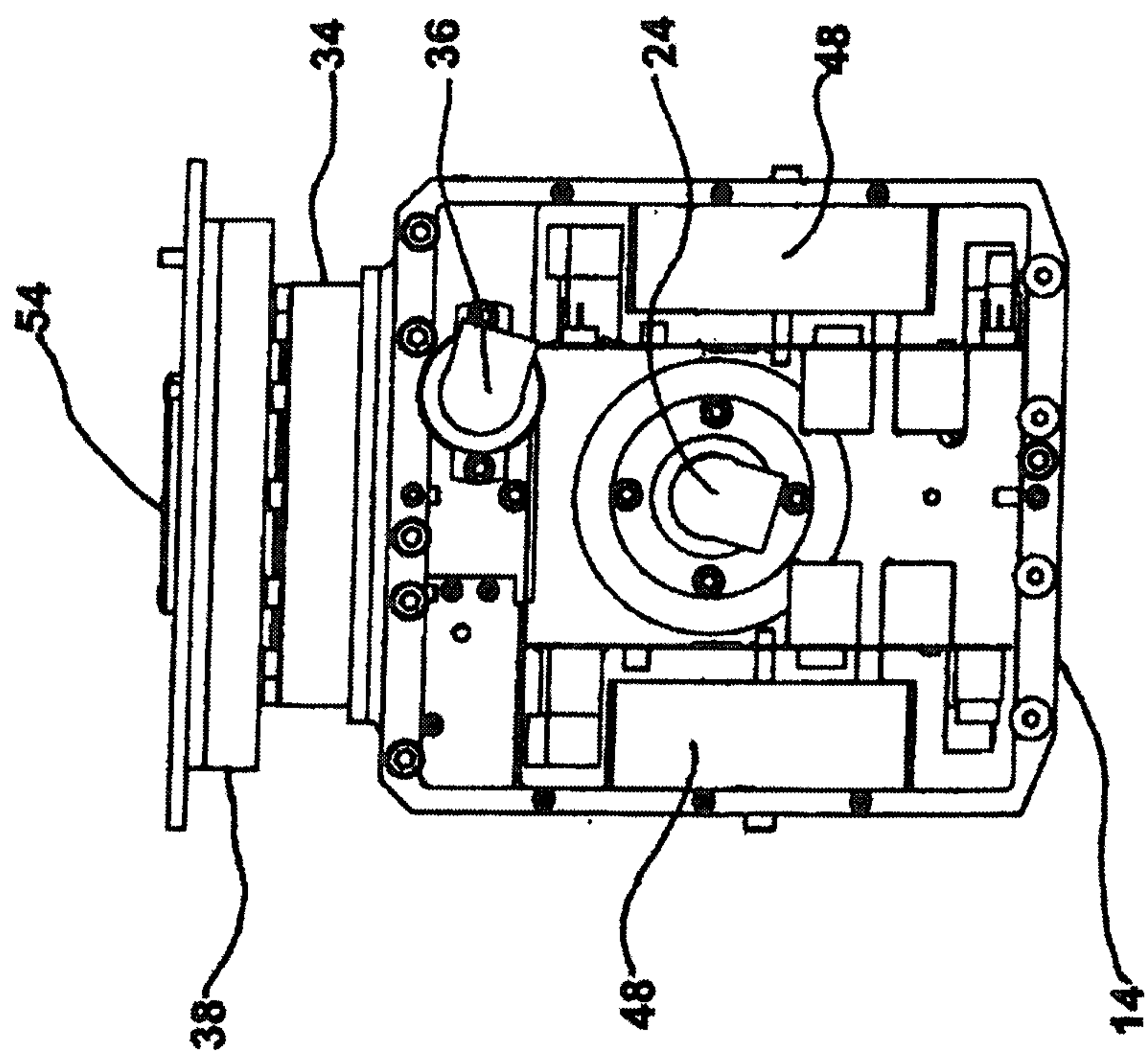


FIG. 3

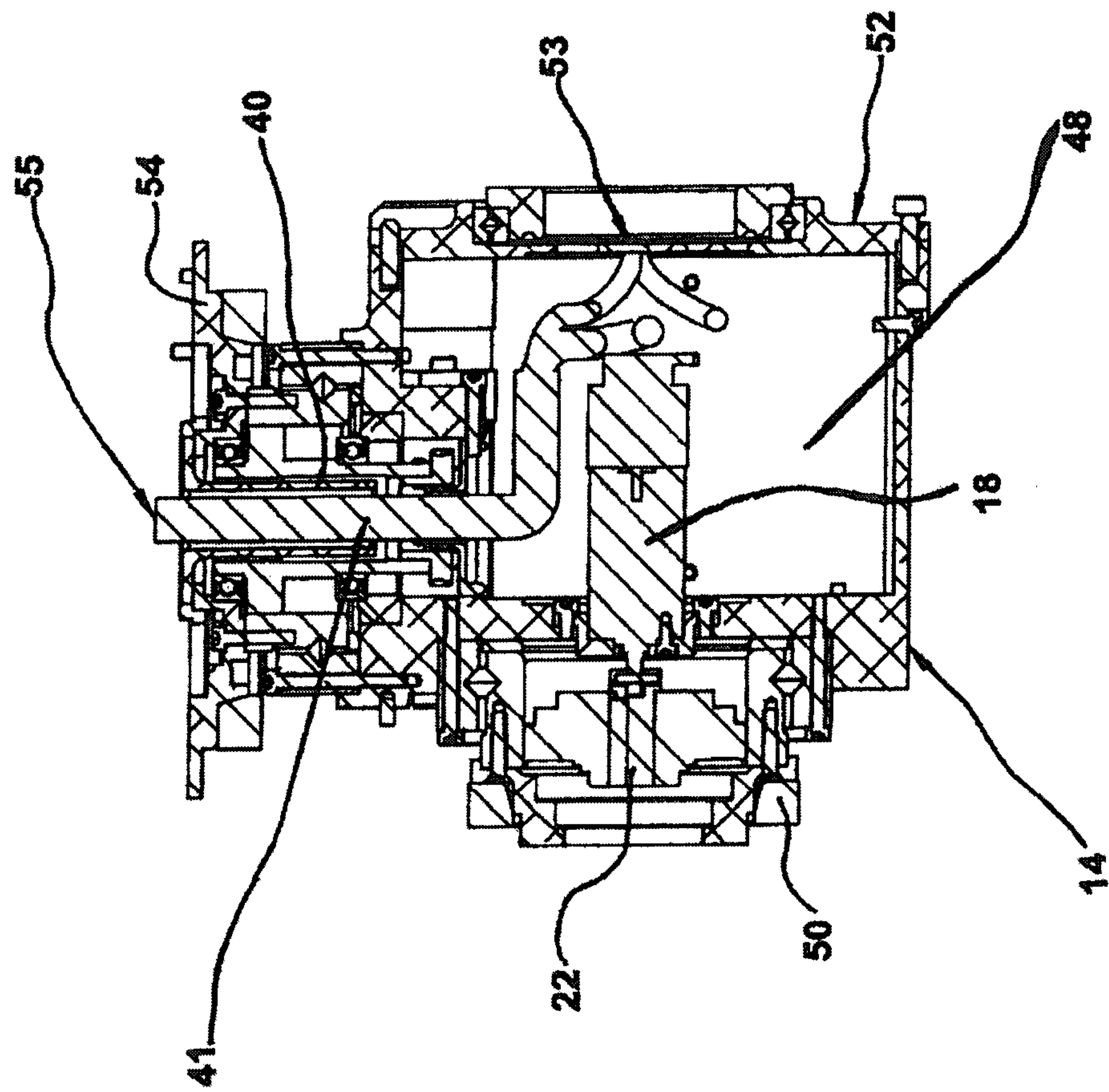


FIG. 4

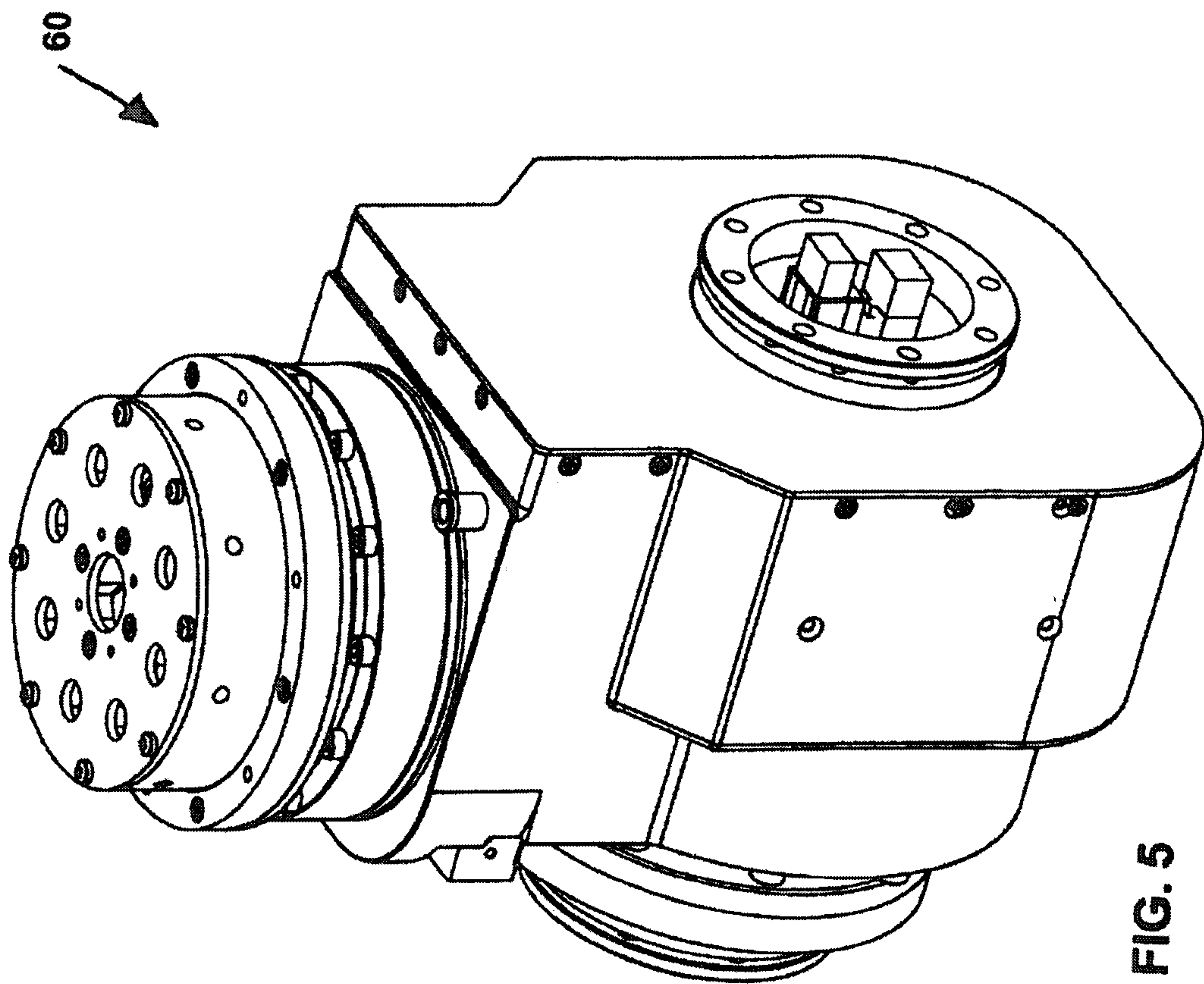


FIG. 5

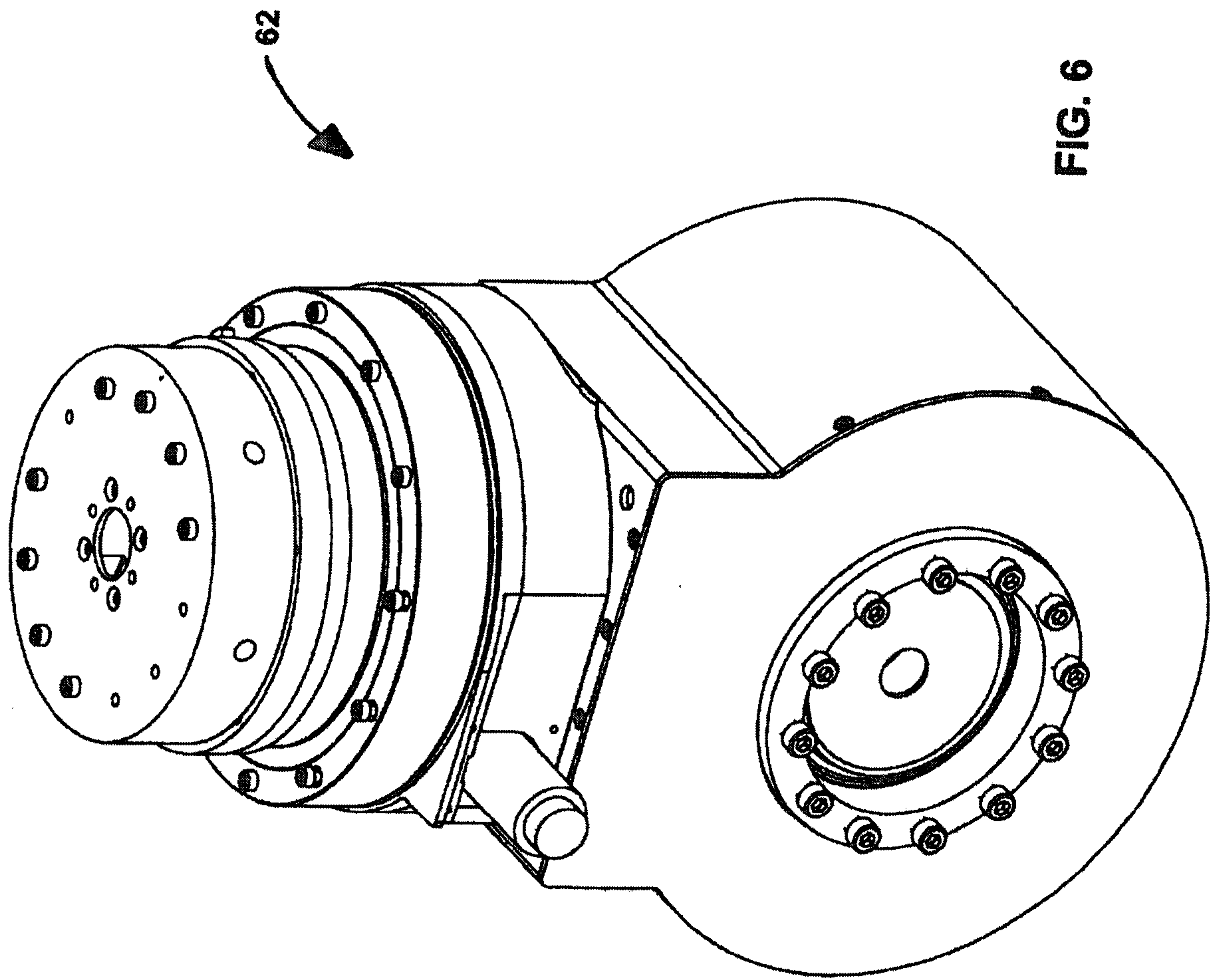


FIG. 6

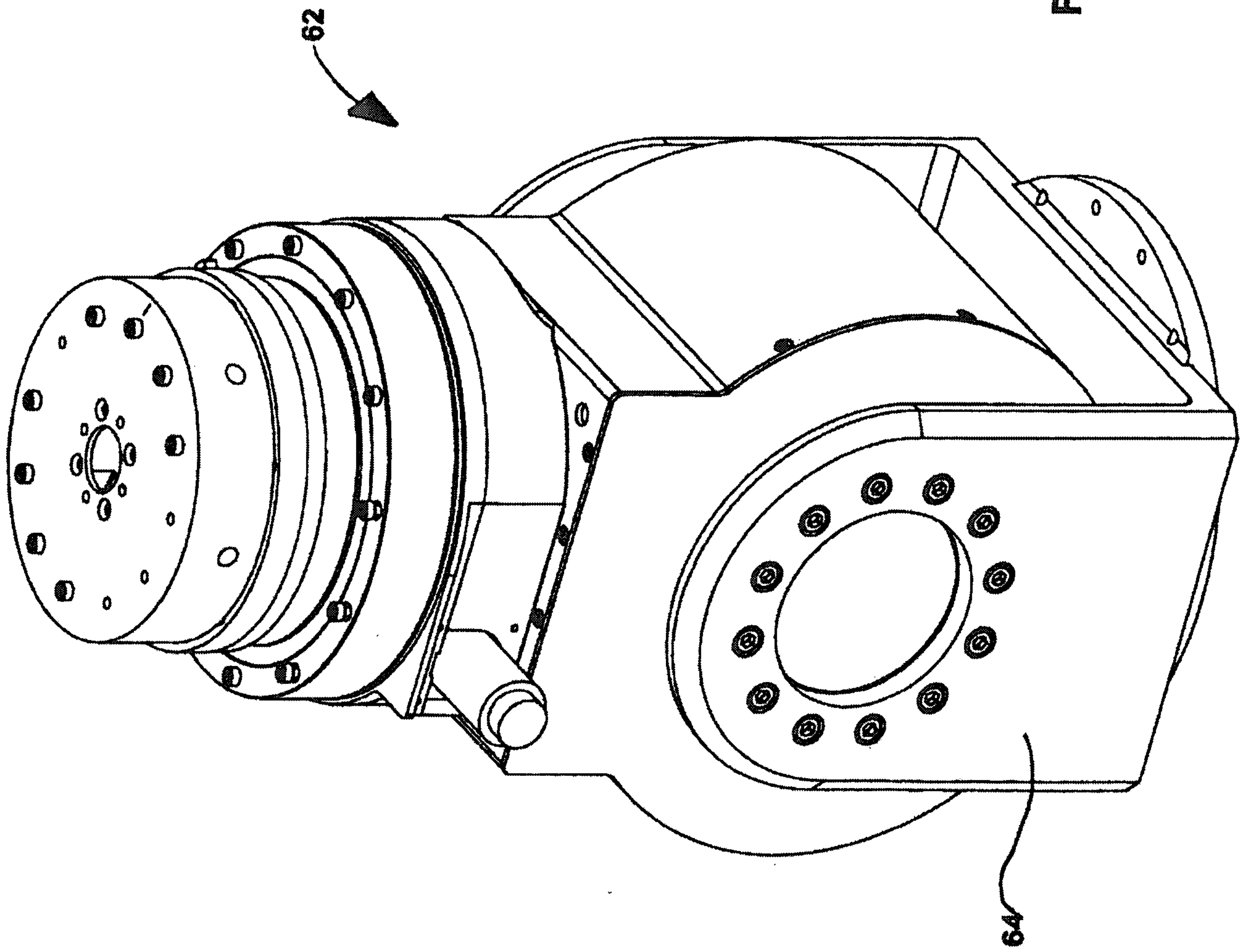


FIG. 7

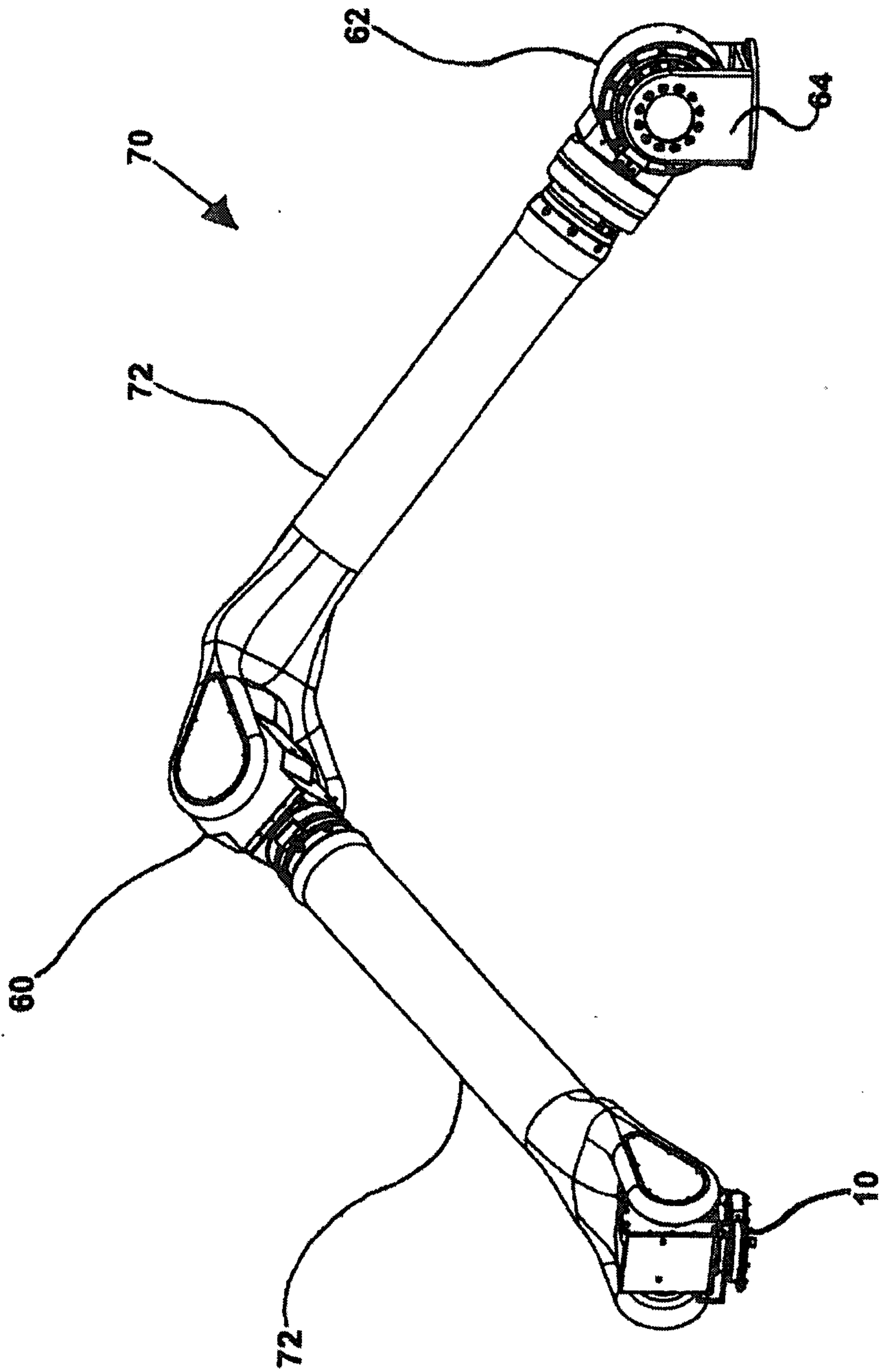


FIG. 8

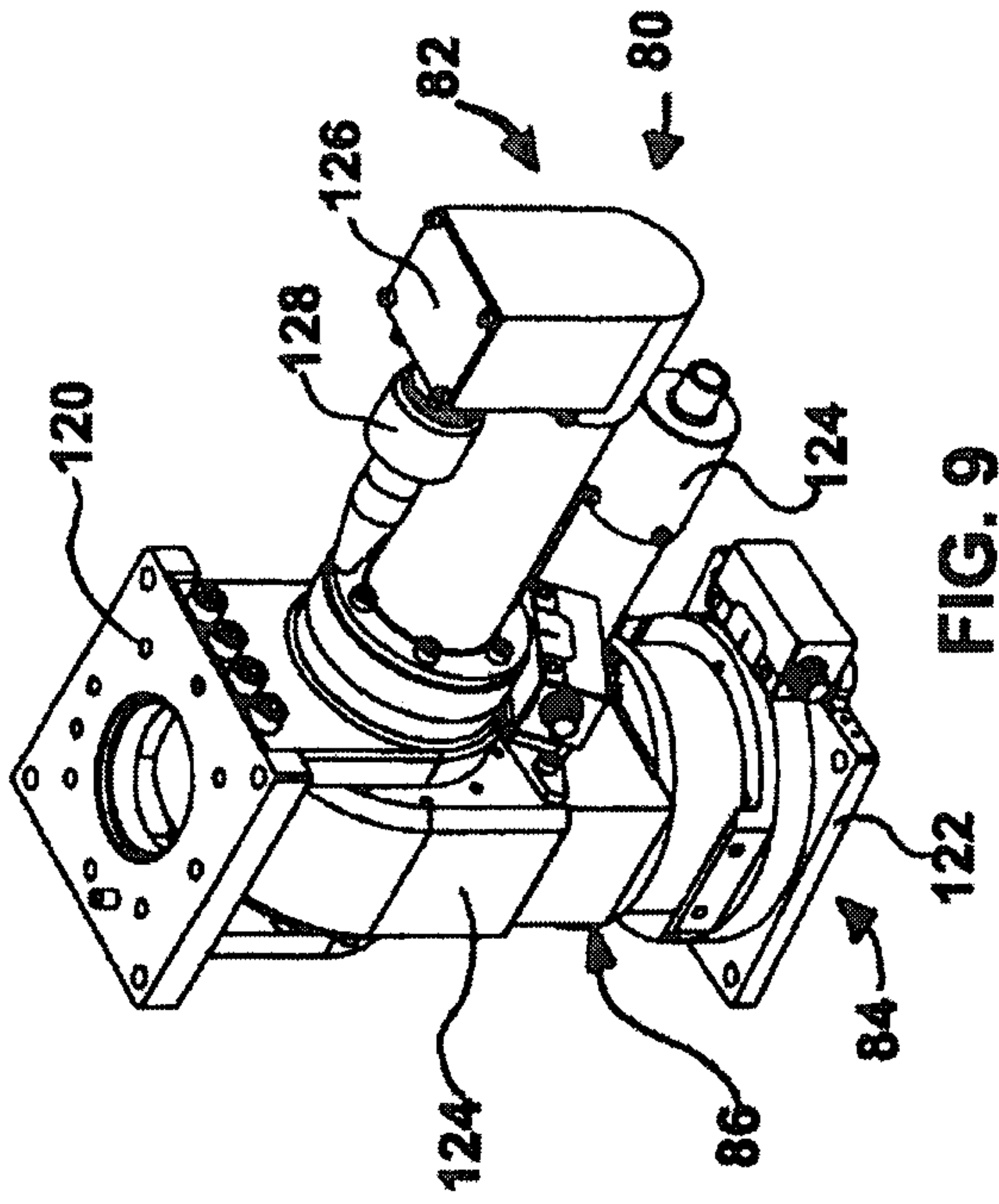


FIG. 9

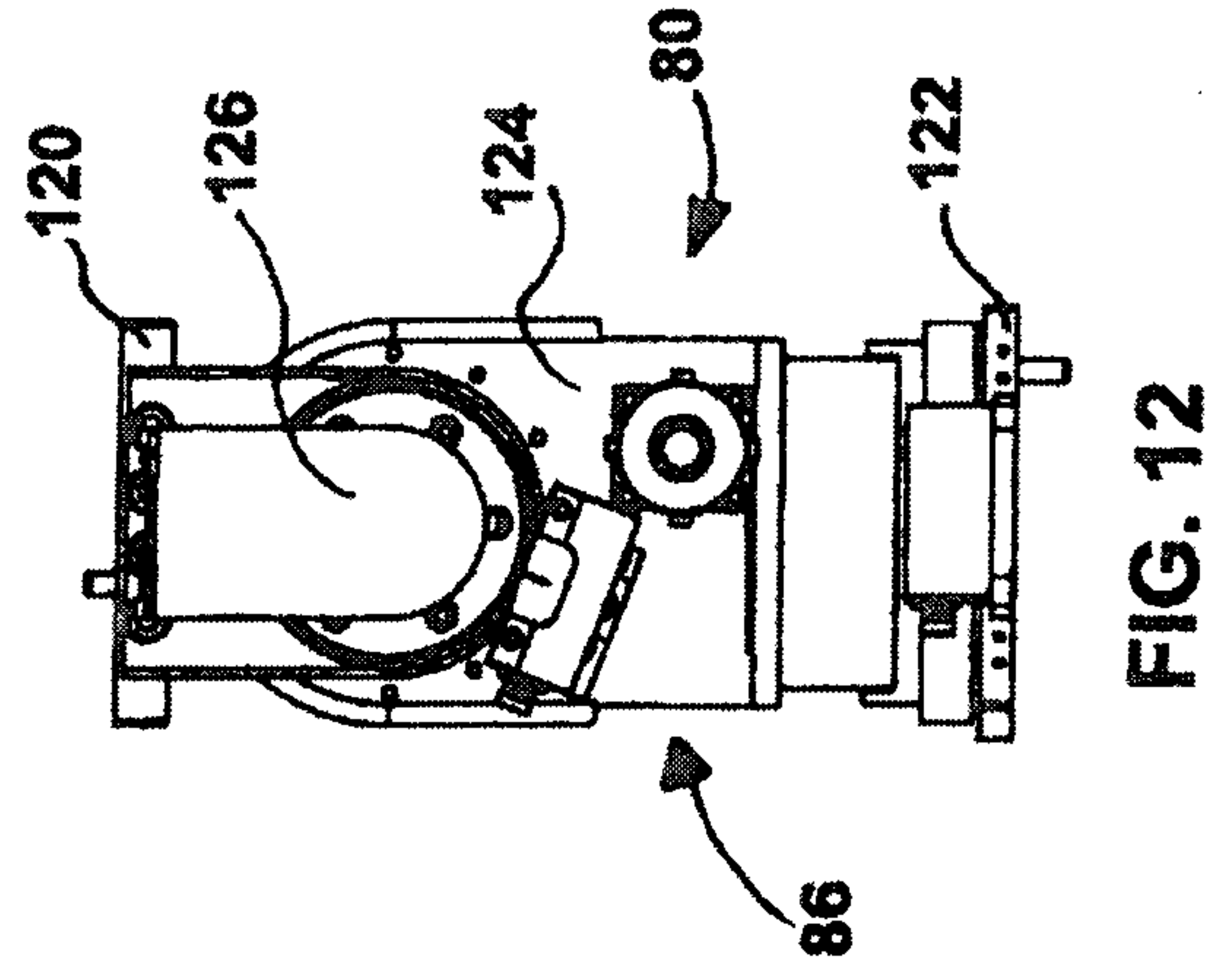


FIG. 12

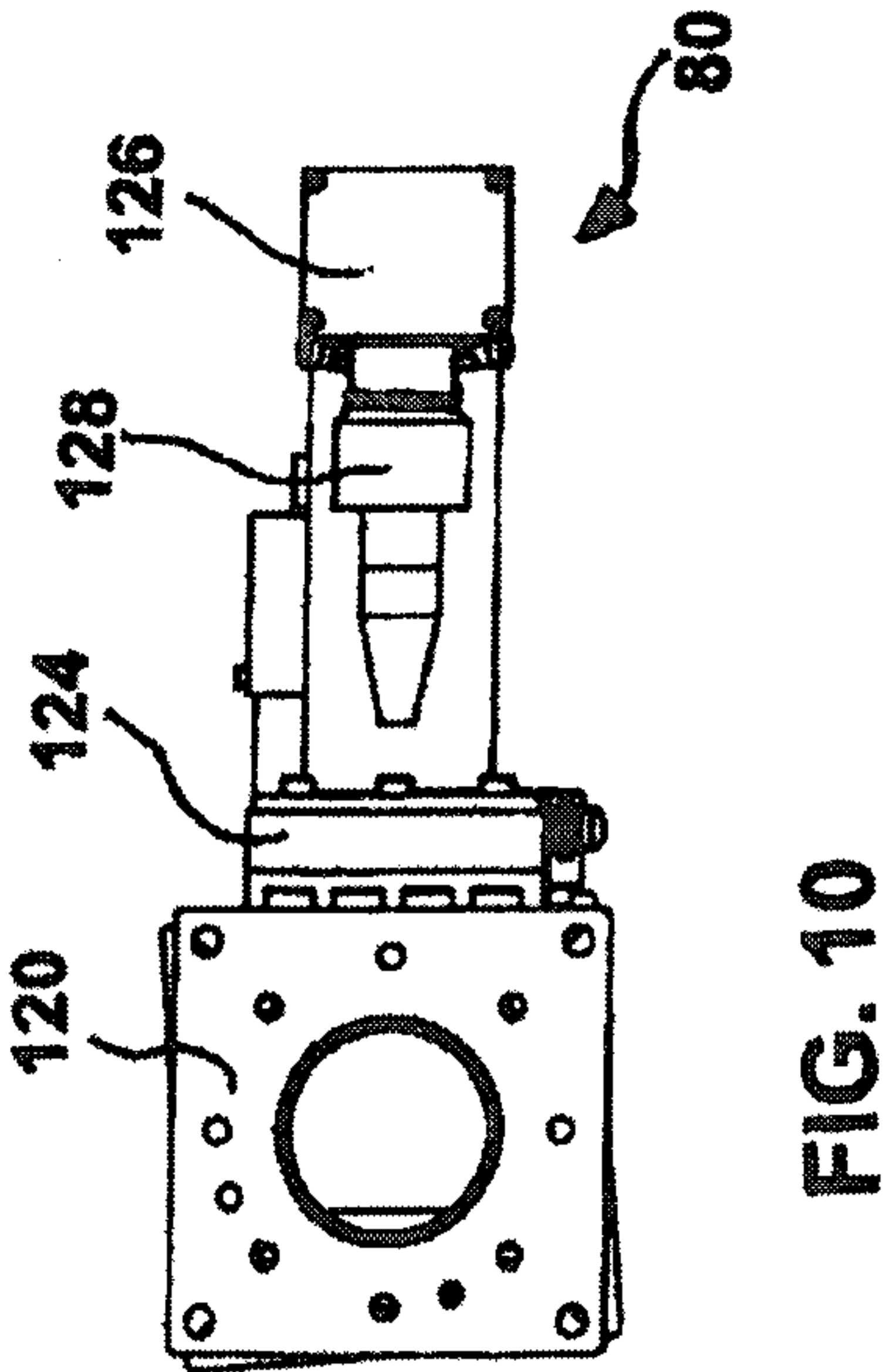


FIG. 10

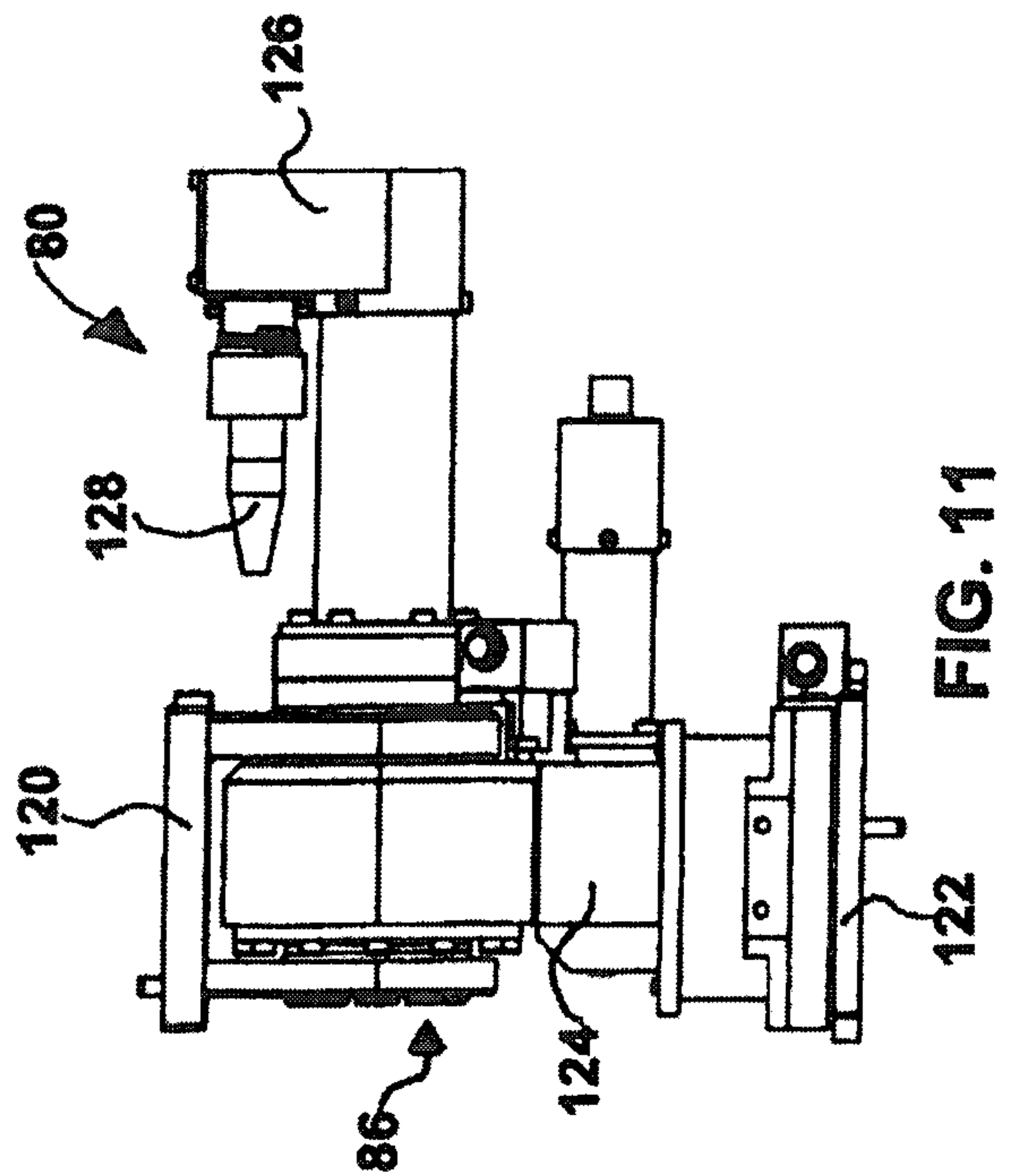


FIG. 11

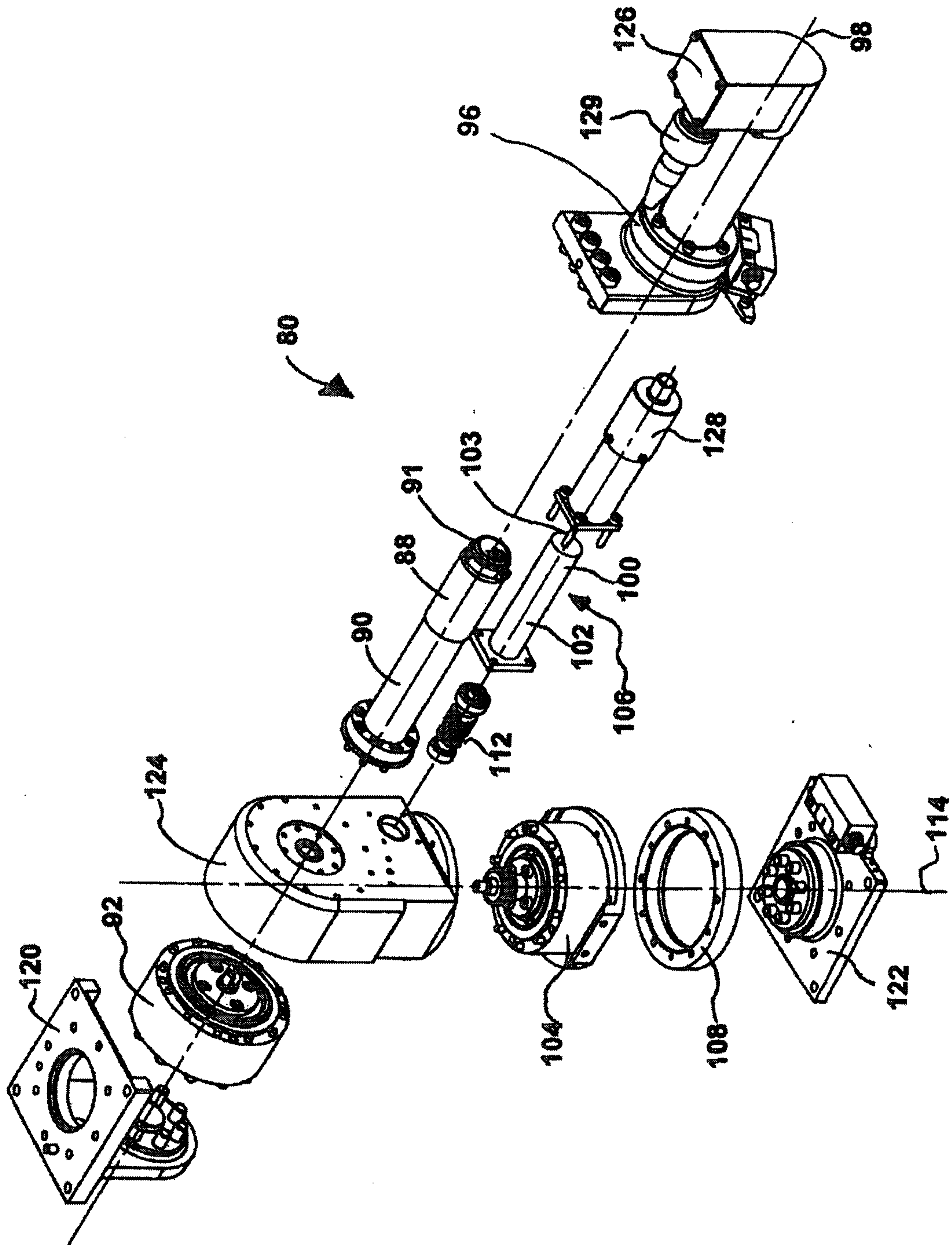
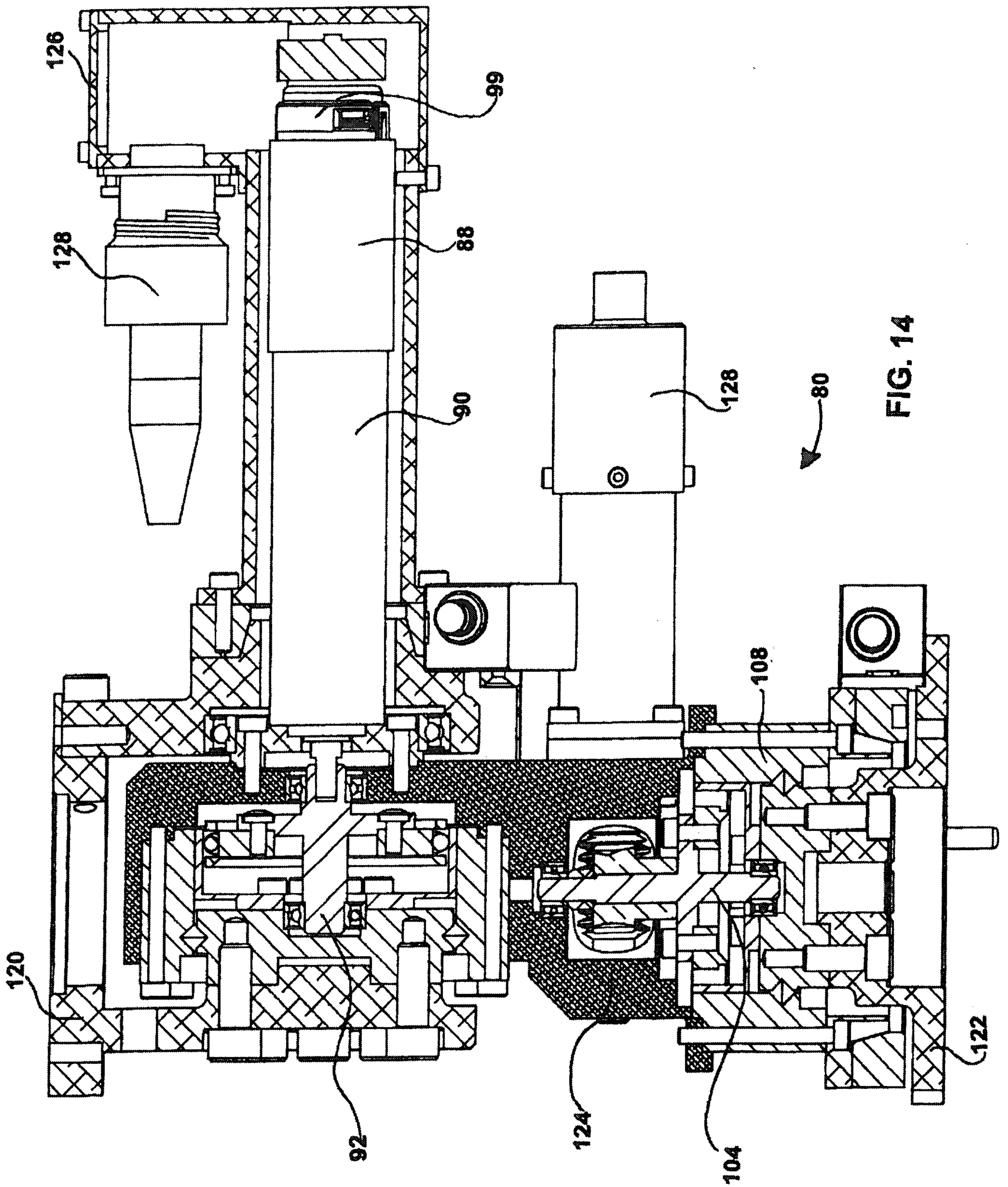


FIG. 13



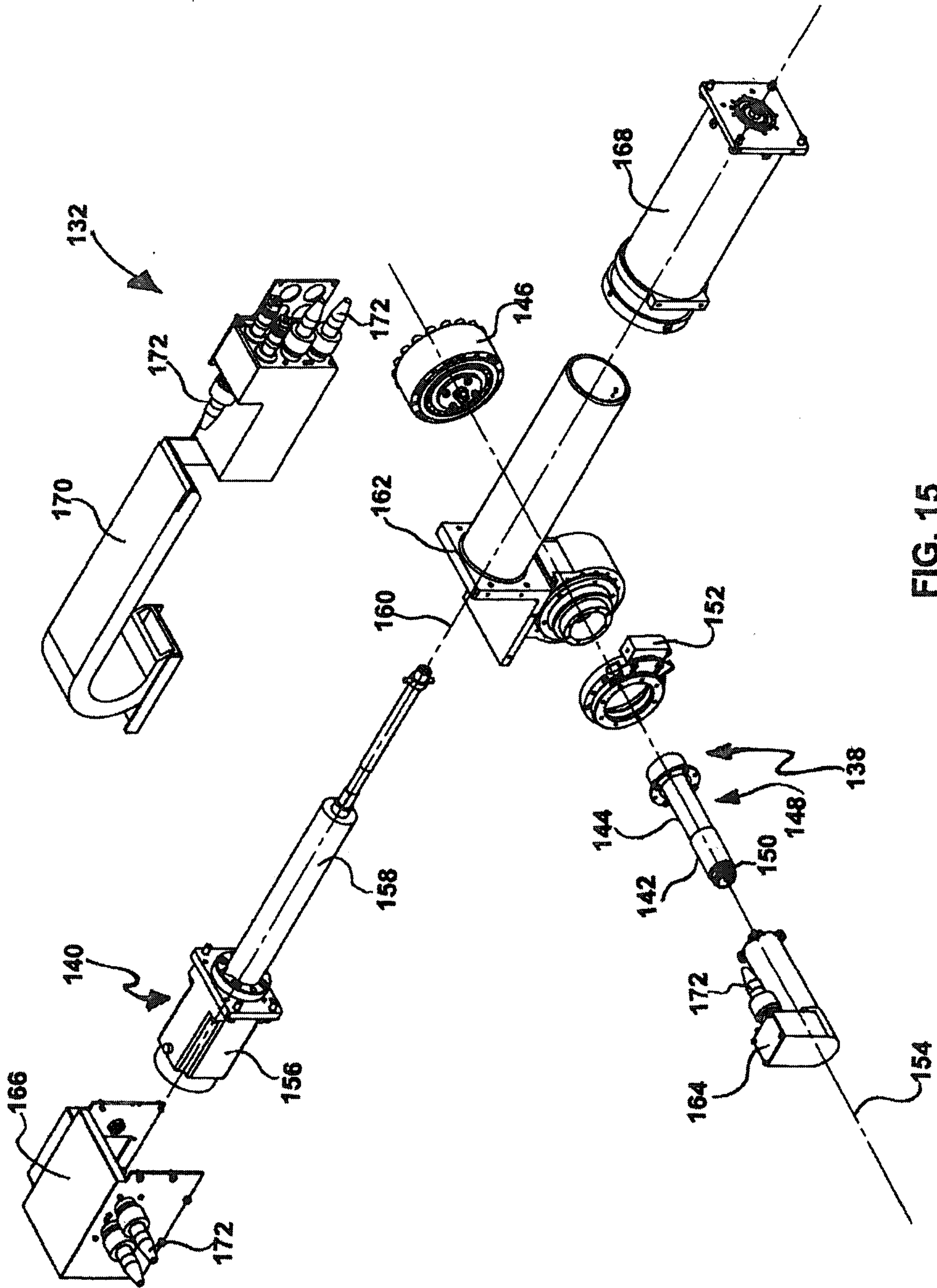


FIG. 15

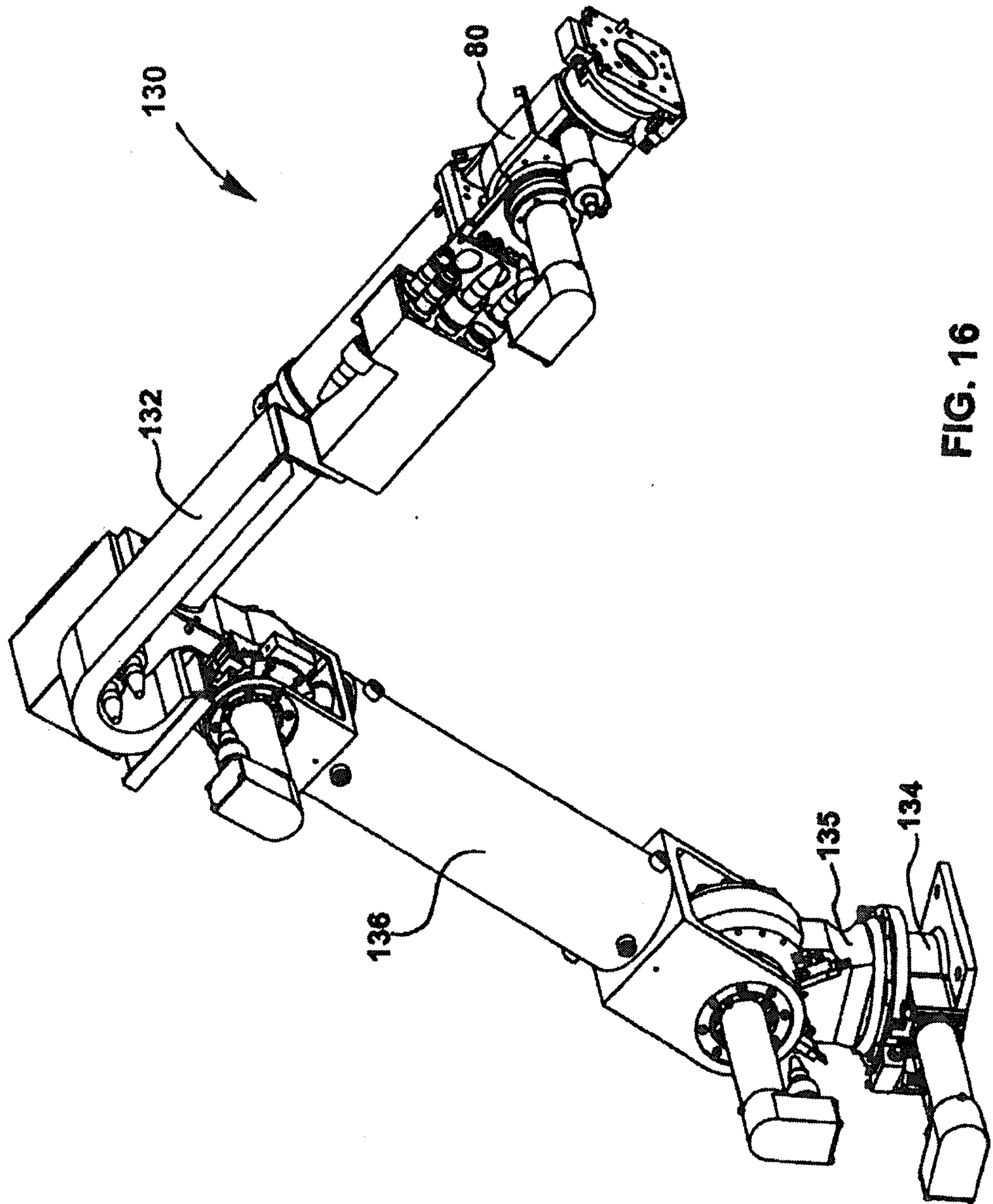


FIG. 16

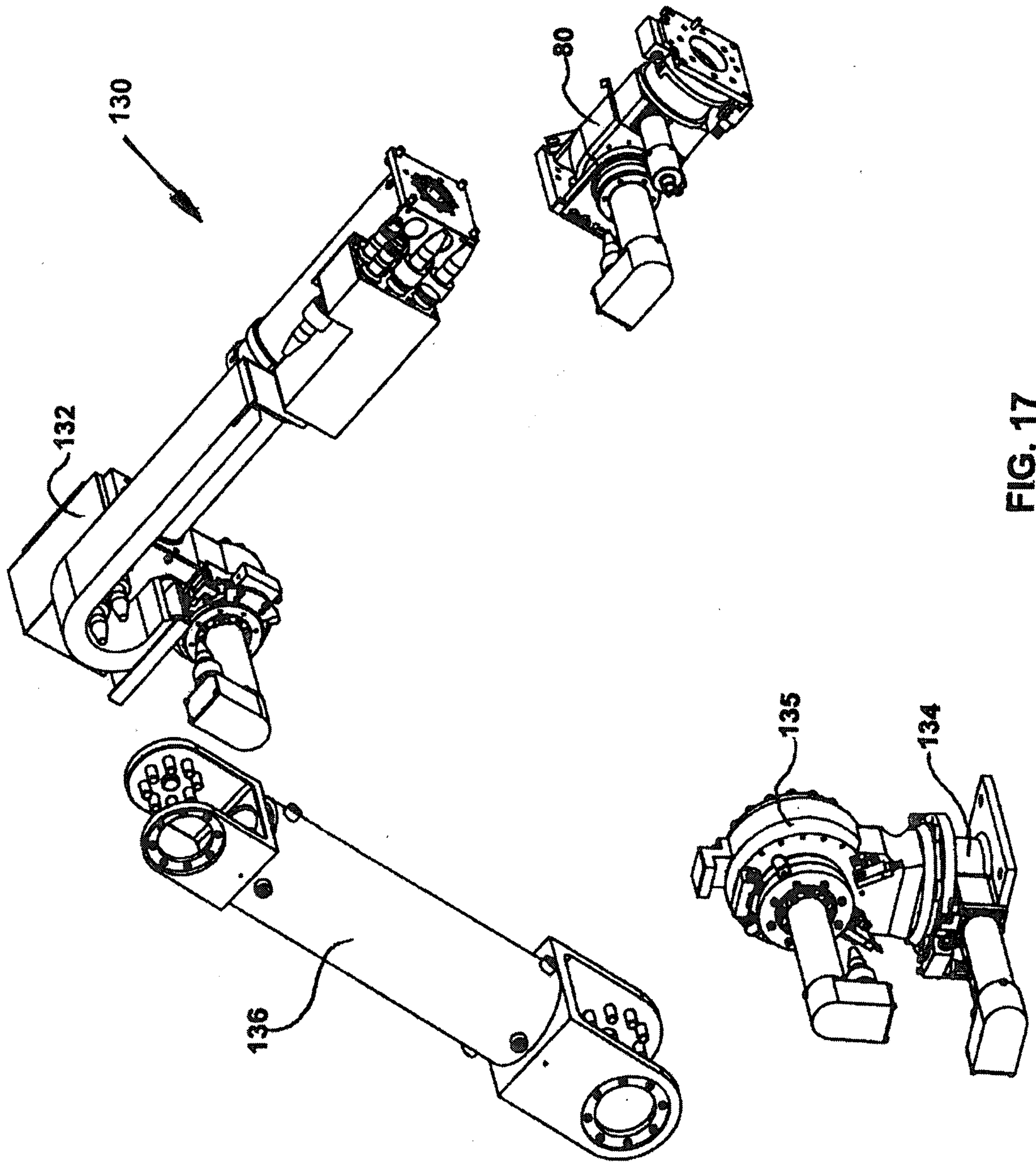


FIG. 17

