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Graf

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(54) **BEARING CENTERING PLATE CENTERED ON A PISTON**

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F16H 45/02 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **F16H 45/02** (2013.01); **F16H 2045/0278** (2013.01); **F16H 2045/0205** (2013.01)
USPC **192/3.29**; 192/110 B

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC F16H 2041/24
USPC 192/3.29, 3.33, 85.38, 110 B; 384/441
See application file for complete search history.

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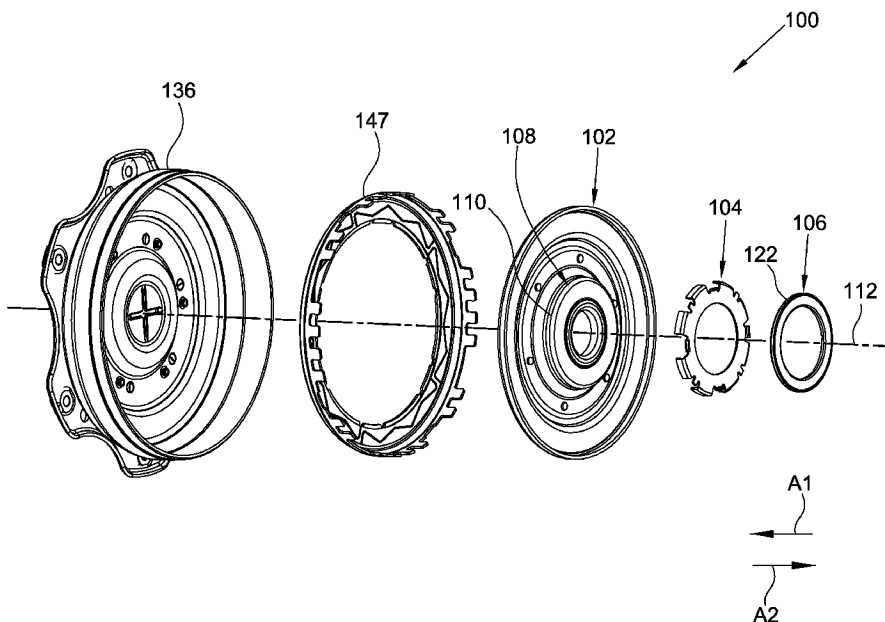
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An assembly for a clutch, including a piston plate having an annular portion with a first substantially circumferentially aligned surface, and a bearing centering plate including at least one second substantially circumferentially aligned surface engaged with the first surface, the bearing centering plate arranged to retain a thrust bearing or bushing. An assembly for a clutch, including a piston plate having a first surface aligned with an axis of rotation for the clutch, at a first substantially uniform distance from the axis, and facing radially outward, a thrust bearing or bushing, and a bearing centering plate. The bearing centering plate including at least one second surface arranged to contact the first surface, and at least one third surface aligned with the axis, at a second substantially uniform distance from the axis, facing radially inward or radially outward, and arranged to contact a circumference of the thrust bearing or the bushing.

11 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



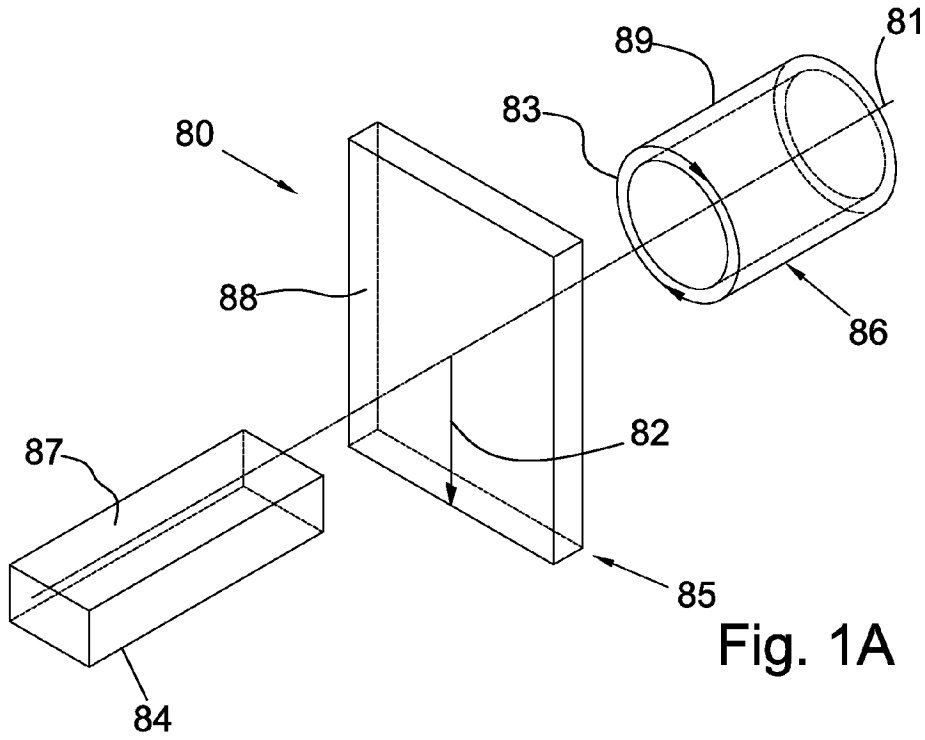


Fig. 1A

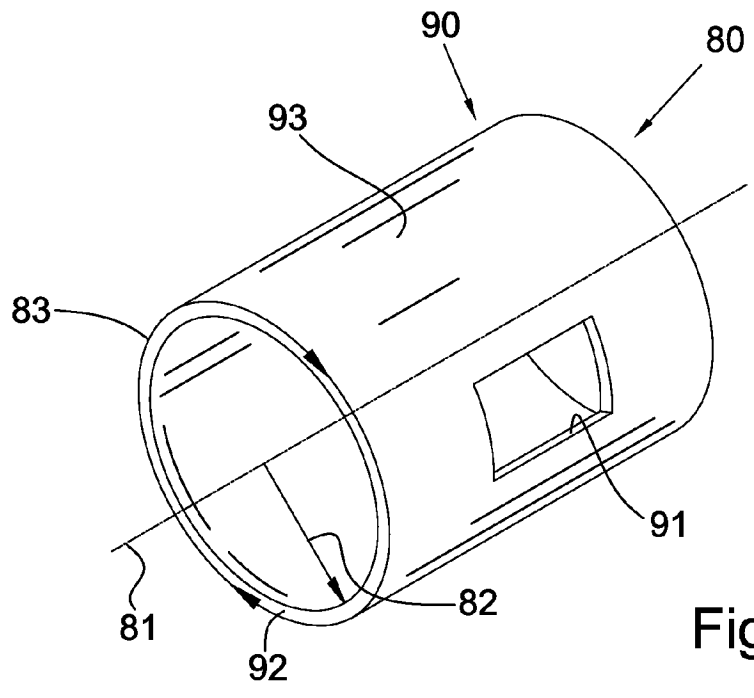


Fig. 1B

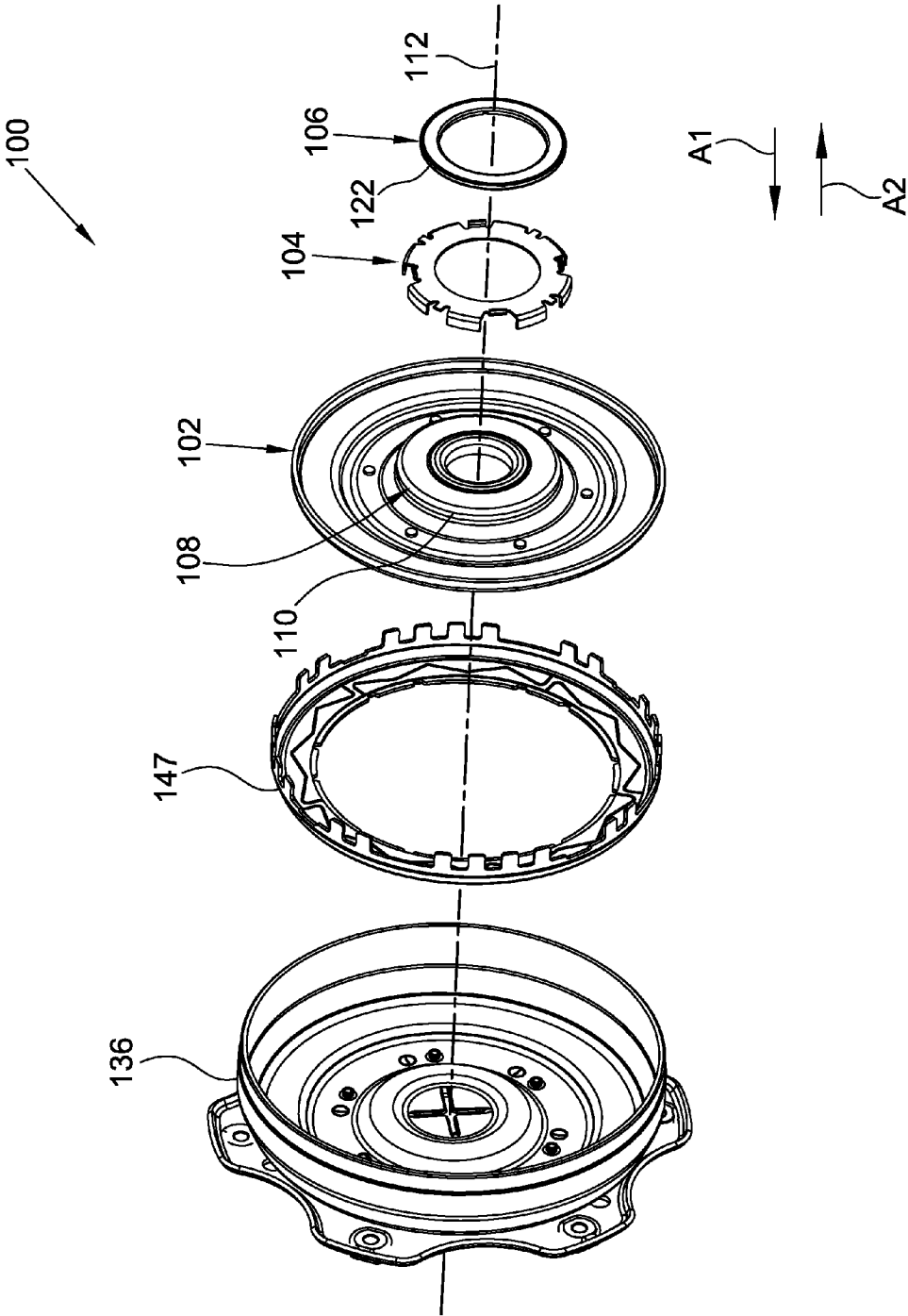


Fig. 2

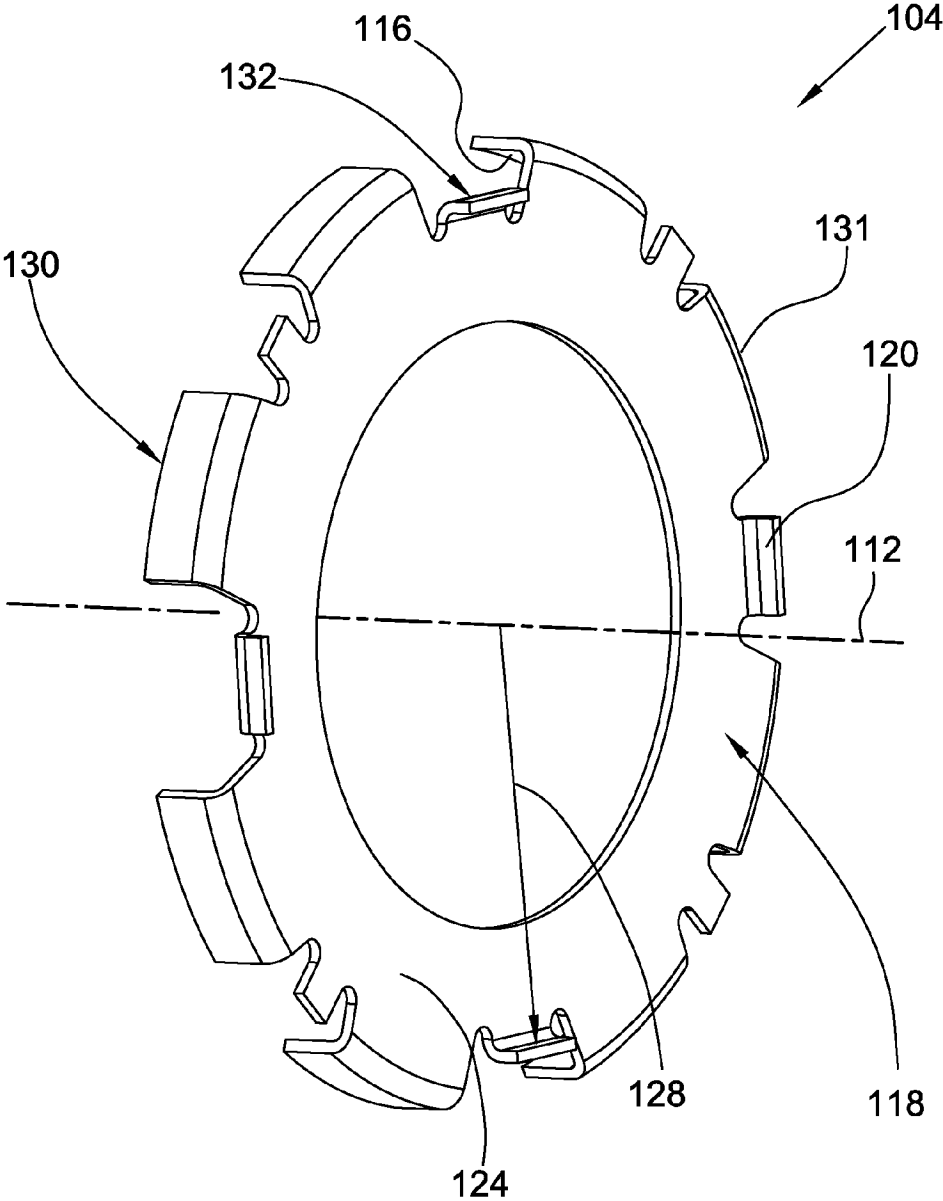


Fig. 3

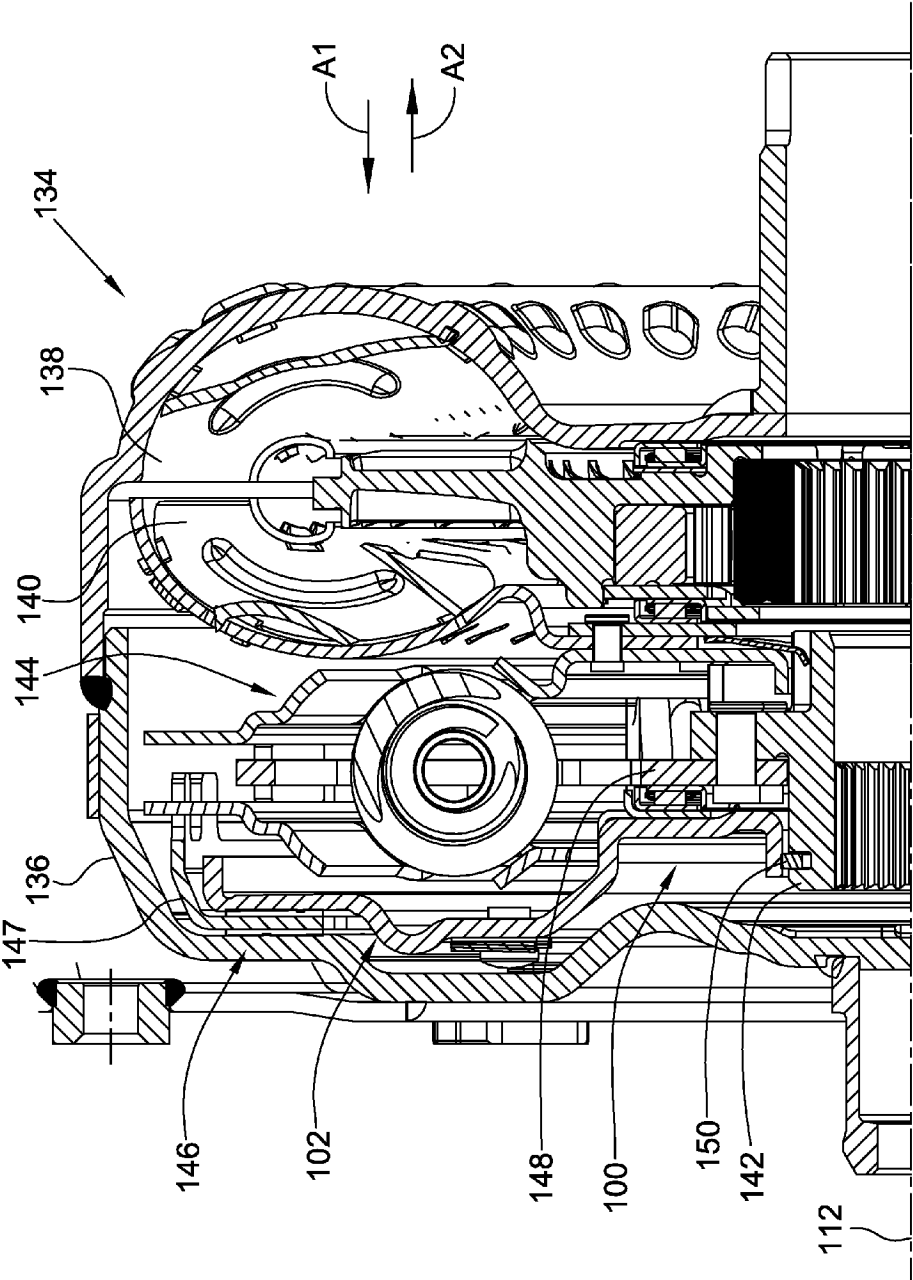


Fig. 4

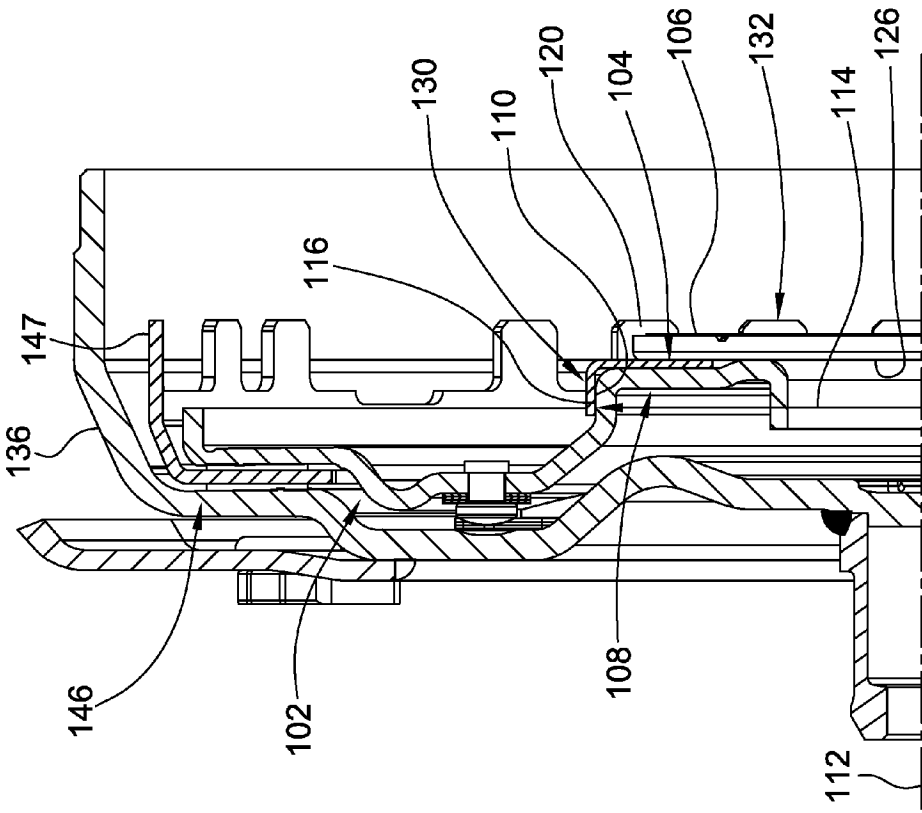


Fig. 5

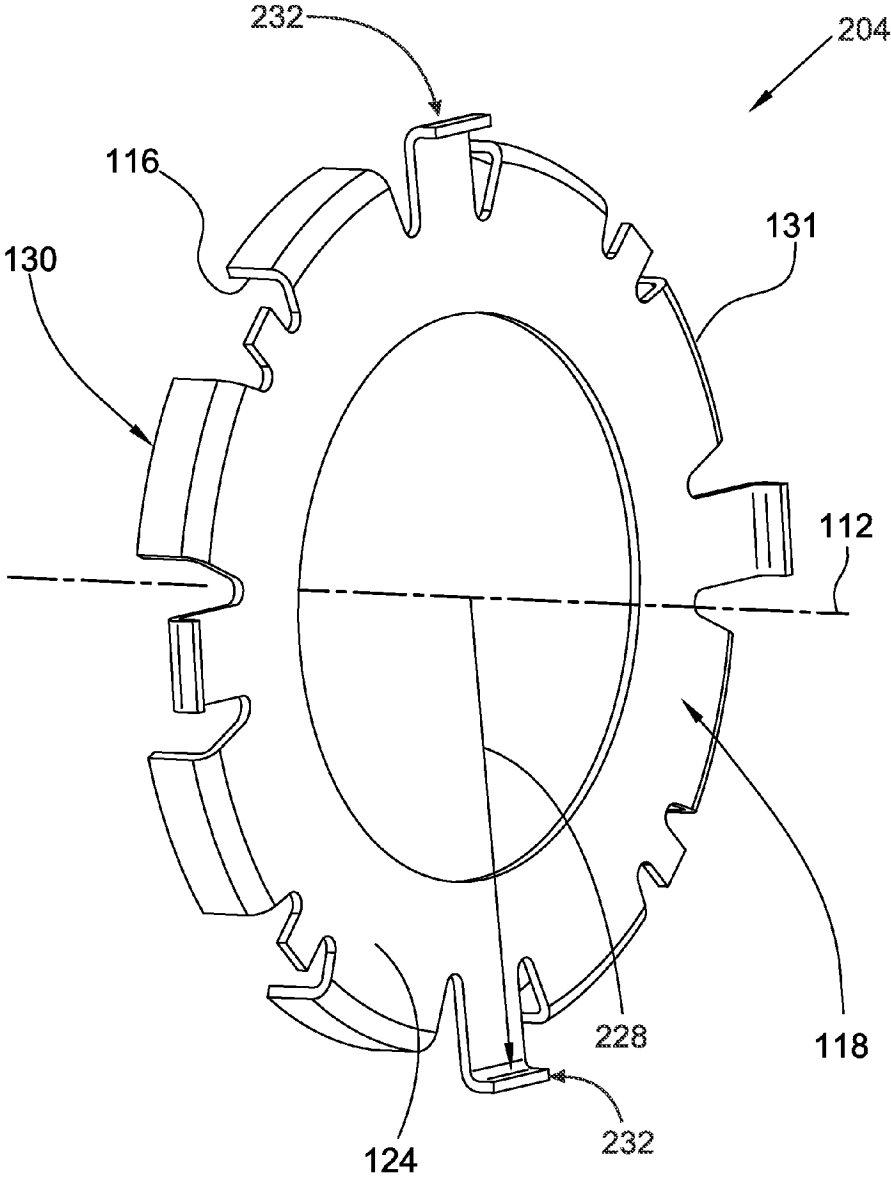


Fig. 6

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BEARING CENTERING PLATE CENTERED ON A PISTON

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This patent claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/468,895 filed Mar. 29, 2011, which application is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present disclosure relates to an assembly for a clutch including a bearing centering plate engageable with a piston plate to retain a thrust bearing or bushing.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

It is known to locate a thrust bearing or bushing between components of a torque converter to accommodate axial thrust and relative rotation of the components. For example, when an axial force urges the components toward each other, the thrust bearing or bushing is brought into contact with respective surfaces of the components and enables relative rotation between the components while minimizing wear on the components. U.S. Pat. No. 6,926,131 discloses a piston plate having an axial extension, proximate an inner circumference of the piston plate, for engaging a thrust bearing or bushing. Extensive cold working of the piston plate, and possible secondary operations, such as machining, are required to form such an extension and increase the cost and complexity associated with fabricating the piston plate.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to aspects illustrated herein, there is provided an assembly for a clutch, including a piston plate having an annular portion with a first substantially circumferentially aligned surface, and a bearing centering plate including at least one second substantially circumferentially aligned surface engaged with the first substantially circumferentially aligned surface. The bearing centering plate is arranged to retain a thrust bearing or a bushing.

According to aspects illustrated herein, there is provided an assembly for a clutch, including a piston plate having a first surface aligned with an axis of rotation for the clutch, at a first substantially uniform distance from the axis, and facing radially outward from the axis, a thrust bearing or a bushing, and a bearing centering plate. The bearing centering plate has at least one second surface arranged to contact the first surface; and at least one third surface aligned with the axis and at a second substantially uniform distance from the axis. The at least one third surface faces radially inward toward the axis and is arranged to contact an outer circumference of the thrust bearing or the bushing, or faces radially outward from the axis and is arranged to contact an inner circumference of the thrust bearing or the bushing.

According to aspects illustrated herein, there is provided a torque converter, including a turbine, a hub fixedly secured to the turbine and arranged to engage an input shaft, a damper assembly having a flange engaged with the hub, and a clutch. The clutch includes a piston plate with a first circumferential surface, where the piston plate is displaceable to open and close the clutch, a bearing centering plate, and a thrust bearing or bushing. The bearing centering plate includes at least one first surface engaged with the first circumferential surface and

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at least one second surface. The thrust bearing or a bushing is in contact with the at least one second surface. Contact between the bearing centering plate and the thrust bearing or the bushing restrains the thrust bearing or the bushing in a radial direction.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Various embodiments are disclosed, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying schematic drawings in which corresponding reference symbols indicate corresponding parts, in which:

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of a cylindrical coordinate system demonstrating spatial terminology used in the present application;

FIG. 1B is a perspective view of an object in the cylindrical coordinate system of FIG. 1A demonstrating spatial terminology used in the present application;

FIG. 2 is an exploded perspective view of an assembly for a clutch, a plate for the clutch, and a cover for a torque converter;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the bearing centering plate shown in FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a partial cross-sectional view of a torque converter including the assembly for a clutch, plate for the clutch, and cover shown in FIG. 2;

FIG. 5 is a partial cross-sectional view of a portion of the torque converter shown in FIG. 4 including the assembly for a clutch; and,

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a bearing centering plate.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

At the outset, it should be appreciated that like drawing numbers on different drawing views identify identical, or functionally similar, structural elements of the disclosure. It is to be understood that the disclosure as claimed is not limited to the disclosed aspects.

Furthermore, it is understood that this disclosure is not limited to the particular methodology, materials and modifications described and as such may, of course, vary. It is also understood that the terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular aspects only, and is not intended to limit the scope of the present disclosure.

Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood to one of ordinary skill in the art to which this disclosure belongs. It should be understood that any methods, devices or materials similar or equivalent to those described herein can be used in the practice or testing of the disclosure.

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of cylindrical coordinate system **80** demonstrating spatial terminology used in the present application. The present invention is at least partially described within the context of a cylindrical coordinate system. System **80** has a longitudinal axis **81**, used as the reference for the directional and spatial terms that follow. The adjectives "axial," "radial," and "circumferential" are with respect to an orientation parallel to axis **81**, radius **82** (which is orthogonal to axis **81**), and circumference **83**, respectively. The adjectives "axial," "radial" and "circumferential" also are regarding orientation parallel to respective planes. To clarify the disposition of the various planes, objects **84**, **85**, and **86** are used. Surface **87** of object **84** forms an axial plane. That is, axis **81** forms a line along the surface. Surface **88** of object **85** forms a radial plane. That is, radius **82** forms a line along the surface. Surface **89** of object **86** forms a circumferential plane. That is, circumference **83** forms a line along the

surface. As a further example, axial movement or disposition is parallel to axis **81**, radial movement or disposition is parallel to radius **82**, and circumferential movement or disposition is parallel to circumference **83**. Rotation is with respect to axis **81**.

The adverbs “axially,” “radially,” and “circumferentially” are with respect to an orientation parallel to axis **81**, radius **82**, or circumference **83**, respectively. The adverbs “axially,” “radially,” and “circumferentially” also are regarding orientation parallel to respective planes.

FIG. 1B is a perspective view of object **90** in cylindrical coordinate system **80** of FIG. 1A demonstrating spatial terminology used in the present application. Cylindrical object **90** is representative of a cylindrical object in a cylindrical coordinate system and is not intended to limit the present invention in any manner. Object **90** includes axial surface **91**, radial surface **92**, and circumferential surface **93**. Surface **91** is part of an axial plane, surface **92** is part of a radial plane, and surface **93** is a circumferential surface.

FIG. 2 is an exploded view of assembly **100** for a clutch, a plate for the clutch, and a cover for a torque converter.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the bearing centering plate shown in FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a partial cross-sectional view of a torque converter including assembly **100** for a clutch, the plate for the clutch, and the cover shown in FIG. 2.

FIG. 5 is a partial cross-sectional view of a portion of the torque converter shown in FIG. 4 including assembly **100** for a clutch. The following should be viewed in light of FIGS. 2 through 5. Assembly **100** includes piston plate **102** and bearing centering plate **104**. In an example embodiment, the assembly includes thrust bearing or bushing **106**. A thrust bearing is referenced in the discussion that follows; however, it should be understood that the discussion also is applicable to a bushing. Plate **102** includes annular portion **108** with surface **110**. Surface **110** is substantially circumferentially aligned. By “substantially circumferentially aligned” we mean that the general orientation of the surface is circumferential, but that the orientation may vary to a degree from a purely circumferential orientation. For example, the surface may have a slight tilt in an axial direction. Surface **110** also can be described as being aligned with axis of rotation **112** for the clutch, at substantially uniform distance **114** from the axis, and facing radially outward from the axis. By “substantially uniform distance” we mean that some variation of distance **114** along surface **110** in an axial direction is possible.

The bearing centering plate includes at least one substantially circumferentially aligned surface **116** engaged with surface **110**. The bearing centering plate is arranged to retain the thrust bearing with at least one surface **118**. Portion **120** of surface **118** is a substantially circumferentially aligned surface and is arranged to engage outer circumference **122** of the thrust bearing to restrain the thrust bearing in a radial direction. In an example embodiment (not shown), surface **118** is a substantially circumferentially aligned surface and is arranged to engage an inner circumference of the thrust bearing or bushing. In an example embodiment, portion **124** of surface **118** is radially disposed and in contact with radially disposed surface **126** of the thrust bearing. Portion **120** can be described as being aligned with axis of rotation **112**, at substantially uniform distance **128** from the axis, and facing radially inward toward the axis. By “substantially uniform distance” we mean that some variation of distance **128** along portion **120** in an axial direction is possible. Thus, surface **116** radially aligns plate **104** with plate **102**, and portion **120** radially aligns the thrust washer with plate **104**.

In an example embodiment, the bearing centering plate includes a plurality of protrusions **130** extending substantially in axial direction **A1**. By “substantially in axial direction” we mean that the general orientation of the protrusions is an axial direction, but that the orientation may vary to a degree from a purely axial orientation. For example, the protrusions may have a slight tilt in an axial direction. Protrusions **130** form surfaces **116**. In an example embodiment, protrusions **130** extend from outer circumference **131** of plate **104**. In an example embodiment, the bearing centering plate includes a plurality of protrusions **132** extending substantially in axial direction **A2**, opposite direction **A1**. Protrusions **132** form portion **120**. In an example embodiment, protrusions **132** are located radially inward of protrusions **130**. Although particular numbers of protrusions **130** and **132** are shown, it should be understood that other respective numbers of protrusions **130** and **132** are possible. It should also be understood that other configurations of protrusions **130** and **132** are possible. For example, protrusions **132** may be located radially outward of protrusions **130** or may extend from an inner circumference of plate **104**.

In an example embodiment, assembly **100** is located in torque converter **134** which includes cover **136** arranged to receive torque from a prime mover (not shown), impeller **138**, turbine **140**, hub **142**, damper assembly **144**, and clutch **146** including plate **147**. Clutch **146** includes assembly **100**. The turbine is fixed to the hub, for example, to transmit torque to the hub. Flange **148** of the damper assembly is engaged with the hub to transmit torque to the hub. In the configuration shown in FIGS. 4 and 5, the piston plate is sealed with respect to the hub by sealing element **150** and is displaceable with respect to the hub. In an example embodiment, clutch **146** is a lock up clutch. When the clutch is open, torque flows from the cover to the impeller. When the clutch is closed, the clutch connects cover **136** to the damper assembly, bypassing the impeller and turbine, such that torque flows from the cover directly to the damper assembly.

The thrust washer enables relative rotation between the piston plate and other components of a torque converter, typically a hub such as hub **142** or a component of a damper assembly, such as flange **148**. The thrust washer enables the relative rotation while eliminating or minimizing frictional engagement of the piston plate and the other components, which reduces wear on the piston plate and the other components. For example, in the configuration shown in FIG. 4, force is applied to the piston plate to displace the piston plate in axial direction **A2** to open the clutch. Similarly, pressure applied to the piston plate to close the clutch also applies a force to the hub in axial direction **A1**, towards the piston plate. These forces compress the thrust bearing between the piston plate and the flange, and the thrust bearing enables the relative rotation of the piston plate and the flange.

In an example embodiment (not shown), assembly **100** is located in a transmission.

In an example embodiment, plate **104** is formed by stamping. In an example embodiment, material remaining from the stamping of a different component, for example, a core ring for a torque converter, is used as the blank for the plate. Advantageously, this process reduces costs by using a piece of material that is otherwise scrap and eliminates stamping operations that would otherwise be necessary to produce a blank for the plate. As noted supra, the prior art teaches complex and costly operations on a piston plate to modify the piston plate to engage a thrust washer or bushing. In an example embodiment, piston plate **102** is formed by stamping. Advantageously, as part of the stamping process, portion

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108 of piston plate **106** is formed without the need for additional and costly operations such as cold working or machining.

Although assembly **100** and torque converter **134** have been shown with respective particular configurations of components, it should be understood that assembly **100** and torque converter **134** are not limited to the respective particular configuration of components shown and that other respective configurations of components are possible.

It will be appreciated that various of the above-disclosed and other features and functions, or alternatives thereof, may be desirably combined into many other different systems or applications. Various presently unforeseen or unanticipated alternatives, modifications, variations, or improvements therein may be subsequently made by those skilled in the art which are also intended to be encompassed by the following claims.

FIG. **6** is a perspective view of bearing centering plate **204**. Plate **204** includes protrusions **130** and protrusions **232** with portions **220**. Portions **232** are located at substantially uniform distance **228** from axis **112**. Unlike protrusions **132** for plate **104**, protrusions **232** are located radially outward of protrusions **130**.

What is claimed is:

1. An assembly for a clutch, comprising:

a piston plate including an annular portion with a first substantially circumferentially aligned surface; and,

a bearing centering plate including at least one second substantially circumferentially aligned surface engaged with the first substantially circumferentially aligned surface, the bearing centering plate arranged to retain a thrust bearing or a bushing, wherein the bearing centering plate includes:

a first plurality of protrusions extending in a first substantially axial direction from an outer circumference of the bearing centering plate and forming the second substantially circumferentially aligned surface; and,

a second plurality of protrusions extending in a second substantially axial direction, opposite the first substantially axial direction, and arranged to retain the thrust bearing or the bushing.

2. An assembly for a clutch, comprising:

a piston plate including a first surface aligned with an axis of rotation for the clutch, at a first substantially uniform distance from the axis, and facing radially outward from the axis;

a thrust bearing or a bushing; and,

a bearing centering plate including:

at least one second surface arranged to contact the first surface; and,

at least one third surface aligned with the axis, at a second substantially uniform distance from the axis, wherein the at least one third surface:

faces radially inward toward the axis and is arranged to contact an outer circumference of the thrust bearing or the bushing; or,

faces radially outward from the axis and is arranged to contact an inner circumference of the thrust bearing or the bushing, wherein the bearing centering plate includes:

a first plurality of protrusions extending in a first axial direction from an outer circumference of the bearing centering plate and forming the at least one second surface; and,

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a second plurality of protrusions extending in a second axial direction, opposite the first axial direction, and forming the at least one third surface.

3. The assembly of claim **2**, wherein the second plurality of protrusions is located radially inward of the first plurality of protrusions.

4. The assembly of claim **2**, wherein the second plurality of protrusions is located radially outward of the first plurality of protrusions.

5. A torque converter, comprising:

a turbine;

a hub arranged to engage an input shaft;

a damper assembly including a flange for transmitting torque from the turbine to the hub; and,

a clutch including:

a piston plate with a first circumferential surface facing radially outward from an axis of rotation for the clutch, the piston plate displaceable to open and close the clutch;

a bearing centering plate including:

at least one second surface engaged with the first circumferential surface; and,

at least one third surface; and,

a thrust bearing or a bushing in contact with the at least one third surface, wherein contact between the bearing centering plate and the thrust bearing or the bushing restrains the thrust bearing or the bushing in a radial direction.

6. The torque converter of claim **5**, wherein:

the bearing centering plate includes a plurality of protrusions extending in an axial direction; and,

the plurality of protrusions form the at least one second surface.

7. The torque converter of claim **5**, wherein:

the thrust washer includes a first radially aligned surface;

a first portion of the at least one third surface includes an at least one second circumferential surface engaged with an outer or an inner circumference of the thrust bearing or the bushing; and,

a second portion of the at least one third surface includes a second radially aligned surface in contact with the first radially aligned surface.

8. The torque converter of claim **5**, wherein the at least one third surface includes an at least one second circumferential surface engaged with an outer or an inner circumference of the thrust bearing or the bushing.

9. The torque converter of claim **8**, wherein:

the bearing centering plate includes a plurality of protrusions extending in an axial direction; and,

the plurality of protrusions form the at least one second circumferential surface.

10. The torque converter of claim **5**, wherein the bearing centering plate includes:

a first plurality of protrusions extending in a first axial direction from an outer circumference of the bearing centering plate and forming the at least one second surface; and,

a second plurality of protrusions extending in a second axial direction, opposite the first axial direction, and arranged to contact an outer or an inner circumference of the thrust bearing.

11. The torque converter of claim **5**, wherein: displacement of the piston plate in a first axial direction to open the clutch compresses the thrust bearing or the bushing between the piston plate and the flange.

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