

Abstract Submitted
for the APR14 Meeting of
The American Physical Society

Nikola Tesla, the Ether and his Telautomaton KENDALL MILAR,
University of California, Los Angeles — In the nineteenth century physicists' understanding of the ether changed dramatically. New developments in thermodynamics, energy physics, and electricity and magnetism dictated new properties of the ether. These have traditionally been examined from the perspective of the scientists re-conceptualizing the ether. However Nikola Tesla, a prolific inventor and writer, presents a different picture of nineteenth century physics. Alongside the displays that showcased his inventions he presented alternative interpretations of physical, physiological and even psychical research. This is particularly evident in his telautomaton, a radio remote controlled boat. This invention and Tesla's descriptions of it showcase some of his novel interpretations of physical theories. He offered a perspective on nineteenth century physics that focused on practical application instead of experiment. Sometimes the understanding of physical theories that Tesla reached was counterproductive to his own inventive work; other times he offered new insights. Tesla's utilitarian interpretation of physical theories suggests a more scientifically curious and invested inventor than previously described and a connection between the scientific and inventive communities.

Kendall Milar
University of California, Los Angeles

Date submitted: 09 Jan 2014

Electronic form version 1.4