

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

found in the dualistic philosophers who admit such a thing is very different from this. They conceive the immortal soul to be material, yet invisible, and essentially different from the visible body which it inhabits.

Thus *invisibility* comes to be regarded as a most important attribute of the soul. Some, in fact, compare the soul with ether, and regard it, like ether, as an extremely subtle, light, and highly elastic material, an imponderable agency, that fills the intervals between the ponderable particles of the living organism, others compare the soul with the wind, and so give it a gaseous nature; and it is this simile which first found favor with primitive peoples, and led in time to the familiar dualistic conception. When a man died, the body remained as a lifeless corpse, but the immortal soul "flew out of it with the last breath."

The comparison of the human soul with physical ether as a qualitatively similar idea has assumed a more concrete shape in recent times through the great progress of optics and electricity (especially in the last decade); for these sciences have taught us a good deal about the energy of ether, and enabled us to formulate certain conclusions as to the material character of this all-pervading agency. As I intend to describe these important discoveries later on (in chap. xii.), I shall do no more at present than briefly point out that they render the notion of an "etheric soul" absolutely untenable. Such an etheric soul—that is a psychic substance—which is similar to physical ether, and which, like ether, passes between the ponderable elements of the living protoplasm or the molecules of the brain, cannot possibly account for the individual life of the soul. Neither the mystic notions of that kind which