

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

were warmly discussed about the middle of the century, nor the attempts of modern "Neovitalists" to put their mystical "vital force" on a line with physical ether, call for refutation any longer.

Much more widespread, and still much respected, is the view which ascribes a gaseous nature to the substance of the soul. The comparison of human breath with the wind is a very old one; they were originally considered to be identical, and were both given the same name. The *anemos* and *psyche* of the Greeks, and the *anima* and *spiritus* of the Romans, were originally all names for "a breath of wind"; they were transferred from this to the breath of man. After a time this "living breath" was identified with the "vital force," and finally it came to be regarded as the soul itself, or, in a narrower sense, as its highest manifestation, the "spirit." From that the imagination went on to derive the mystic notion of individual "spirits"; these, also, are still usually conceived as "aëriform beings"—though they are credited with the physiological functions of an organism, and they have been photographed in certain well-known spiritist circles.

Experimental physics has succeeded, during the last decade of the century, in reducing all gaseous bodies to a liquid—most of them, also, to a solid—condition. Nothing more is needed than special apparatus, which exerts a violent pressure on the gases at a very low temperature. By this process not only the atmospheric elements, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen, but even compound gases (such as carbonic-acid gas) and gaseous aggregates (like the atmosphere) have been changed from gaseous to liquid form. In this way the "invisible" substances have become "visible" to all, and in a certain sense "tangible." With