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Article

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### AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE ONTOLOGY OF MAN IN IBIBIO COSMOLOGY

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#### Abstract

Although the Greek philosopher Protagoras declared in antiquity that man is the measure of all things, the controversy as to the nature of man continues to evolve. This paper reviews some theories on the nature of man and applies them as appropriate to the concept of man by Ibibio people of Southern Nigeria. The paper submits that man (as a generic term to cover both genders of human beings) in traditional Ibibio society is regarded as multi-layered. Ibibio concept of the nature of man admits of neither monism nor dualism but a kind of polymorphism although the conceptualizations are gradually losing punch and relevance as Christian thought and philosophy dominate modern life and thought. A need however exists for greater understanding of the nature of man for relevance in the contemporary world given that some persons continue, at differing intensities, to hold on to the multilayered orientation. This paper uses desk research method along with a priori approach and concludes that lower emphasis should continue to be focused on the multilayered system in a scientific world. This being the case, thought and praxis should focus on positivism and pragmatism.

**Keywords:** Man, Ontology, Dualism, Monism, Polymorphism, Positivism, Pragmatism

#### Introduction

The Ibibio man in antiquity must have been as bewildered as the early Greeks about the nature of man and the nature of the universe. This bewilderment in Greece in particular can be read through the different views of the nature of man and the nature of the universe by early philosophers (Okoh, 2003). Thales is reputed to have said that all things in the universe are full of gods! And what were gods other than unexplainable beings or phenomena which man claimed to have powers over the lives and affairs of men? O'Grady (2004) did note that Thales repudiated the role of the supernatural in the universe and was the first person to systematize astronomy and the study of nature leading to his founding of the Milesian School of Natural Philosophy. Nevertheless, the prevalence of deities was a characteristic of Greece, a City state

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which operated a polytheistic system. Ibibio people operated and continue to operate polytheism although to a lesser extent at present.

On the nature of man, Protagoras of Abdera (ca. 490- ca.420 BC) is famous for his claim that "Of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not" (DK 80 B1) usually rendered simply as "Man is the measure of all things." This, Mark (2012) holds, presaged the existential relativism of writers such as Luigi Pirandello ("It is so if you think so") by some two thousand years. To differentiate man from other living things, Aristotle declared in his *Metaphysics* that man is a rational animal although Bertrand Russell (2009) disagreed by stating, "It has been said that man is a rational animal. All my life I have been searching for evidence which could support this." The nature of man continues to elude a definitive position by philosophers. Different philosophers, religionists, and mystics over the millennia have attempted to explain the nature of man and his essence. Yet, no standard position has been adopted on a universal basis to date. This paper reviews some of the popular theories and adapts them to the situation in Nigeria's Akwa Ibom State. It submits that the Ibibio believe in a multi-layered nature of man, that is, man as a composite, multi-layered being beyond the popular dual nature of body and soul. The new generation of Ibibio the paper submits, should move away from polytheism, embrace monism, and focus on the philosophies of pragmatism and positivism.

### **What is Man?**

Man, used in this context to represent the two main human genders, has been a subject of wonder and study by man himself, schools of philosophy, and religions. Man's place in a virtually limitless universe has also engaged thought. An exciting quote from Marcus Aurelius Antonius, Emperor of Rome is instructive on the nature of man in relation to the universe (Libquotes, n.d; Holliday and Hanselman, 2016).

He who does not know what the world is does not know where he is. And he who does not know for what purpose the world exists, does not know who he is nor what the world is. But he who has failed in any one of these things could not even say for what purpose he exists himself (Meditations, Book VIII. 161-180BC).

The quote summarizes the need to determine the ontology of man by man himself because the average human being passes through the world without knowledge of self, the essence of self, and the rationale for man's presence as part of the cosmos at a point in time. Some perspectives on the nature of man are discussed hereunder.

**Platonism:** In the first instance, Howie (1968) submits that "everyone who thinks is by nature a Platonist or an Aristotelian" (p.10). The writer must have referred to thinking in the academic sense of reasoning. People reason either on the idealist platform (Platonian) or the realist platform (Aristotelian). Omoregbe (2005) states that in the Platonian concept of Forms, the soul existed before it became united with the body of which the latter is a form of prison for the former. On dissolution of the material man (the body), the soul becomes independent and can undergo reincarnations till it achieves its purest form and reunites with the Source. In essence, Plato believed in the concept of duality as a primary nature of human beings but the soul he divided further. The soul in Plato's opinion is made up of the rational part, the spirited part, and the appetitive part. The rational part forms the major dividing line between man and other forms, controls the other aspects of man, is indestructible and immortal, and is the highest aspect of man. The spirited part has to do with man's higher emotions while the appetitive part concerns the lower emotions and the sensuous nature of man. The last two are

apparently interred with the bones of man at cessation of life while the rational part continues an independent and indestructible existence. Plato's concept of man and in particular his dualism has influenced thinkers for millennia. The material aspect of man did not attract controversy while the immaterial which Plato broke down into three natures continues to be a source of controversy. He used the analogy of a chariot and charioteer both of them ancient concepts but the conceptualization of the soul remains abstract and mired in controversy.

**Aristotelianism** – Aristotle, Plato's pupil, wrote extensively on several subjects, devoting a volume titled *On the Soul* to the nature of man with a detailed exposition on the concept of soul. Although he was a principal exponent of realism Aristotle also believed in the dual nature of man. In *Metaphysics* Aristotle recorded the famous dictum that "man is a rational animal." This is tied to his conception of soul as the moving force in every living thing which converts 'potentiality' to action. Aristotle canvassed the indivisibility of the soul, reason it can control the functioning of the body. He used the example of some types of animals such as earthworm which when cut into pieces continue to perform all bodily functions in each of the pieces. This argument can be extended to trees which continue to live although a part or parts has or have been cut off. And at a higher level, some parts of the human body can be cut off yet the individual continues to live. Although the soul is indivisible, it operates in levels. These Aristotle christened at the lowest level, the 'nutritive soul' found primarily in plants given they are not capable of motion and sense perception. The 'sensitive soul,' the second, can be found in lower animals (animals other than man) with the characteristics of dominance of nutrition or lower forms of mental performance. Locomotion and sense perception including capacity to feel pleasure, pain, imagination, memory, and desire exist in this second category. The 'rational soul' incorporates the nutritive, sensitive, as well as the faculty of reasoning or intellect. The three levels do not represent a division of soul but a differentiation among the different levels of creation. Put another way, the three levels highlight the differences among categories rather than differences within categories. Man performs at the three levels but a typical plant stops functioning at the first level. However, 'animals' below man can be said to exhibit rational behaviour reason pigs are classified as demonstrating intelligence and dogs and dolphins do demonstrate remarkable activities which go beyond instinct.

**Cartesian Dualism and Post-Cartesian Thoughts:** René Descartes canvassed ontological dualism of two finite substances – mind (spirit or soul) and matter. Man, he held, has two independent but coextensive parts which function together. The body is a temporary structure extended in space and having no consciousness while the soul is a 'substance' with consciousness which can exist independent of the body, can be disembodied, and is indestructible. The idea of substance in the opinion of Descartes, is "a thing which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist" (p.116). Descartes must have been influenced by Christian theology and wrote along that line. However, he had a problem driving the point home as to the possibility and levels of interaction between the soul and the body. Cartesian dualism extends to materialism and 'mental states' and has made an enduring impact on modern philosophy. René Descartes is regarded as the father of modern Western philosophy because he moved thought away from religion to the anthropocentric variety. Okorafor (2023) sees man from three dimensions or natures – the spirit, soul, and body. The spirit, Okorafor holds, connects to the animating soul of the universe known as God and to the rational soul where the soul is regarded as the mind. The body is mortal and houses the spirit and the soul. It is the soul which makes man relevant to the world. This view reminds one of the dualism of Descartes as well as the argument of Ryle (1949) in Tanney (2021) termed "ghost in the machine" which rejected Cartesian dualism. Gilbert Rule's conceptualization of a ghost (soul) in

a machine (body) has retained its fascination till modern times. Brady (1995) holds that Cartesian dualism continues to be relevant at least for interrogational purposes. In all, the nature of man will continue to be a subject of debate because cosmology beyond the physical discounts scientific analysis and interpretation with the precision they offer. But it is germane to note that the effort to understand the nature of man has found usefulness in other fields and in particular neuroscience and psychology.

**Judaism:** One approach towards establishing thought on the nature of man is religious philosophy. The psalmist, David, King of Israel in antiquity asked the question, apparently to Almighty God the Creator, “What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8.4, THB). The psalmist was without doubt awed by the magnificence and munificence of the omnipotent God who nevertheless endowed mortal man with glory and power as listed in verses 5 to 8 of the chapter. Man is even said to have been made “a little lower than the angels” (verse 5). Given the conception that angels are heavenly beings who see and interact with God, man is indeed, or at least potentially, a near perfect being with immanent spirituality. Man in Judaism is a being with two aspects – the corporeal and the incorporeal, that is, the physical and the spiritual, the natural and the preternatural. The physical aspect is fairly easy to describe and explain, as in a person being either a man or a woman, tall or short, white or black, young or old, beautiful or ugly. The incorporeal is harder to describe and explain, reason the realists or pragmatists are not excited about the transcendental.

**Theosophy:** An interesting departure from the dualist theories can be found in Theosophy. The religious organization known as the Theosophical Society is composed of proponents of Buddhist and Brahmanic theories who propagate the concept of theosophy. Founded in New York in 1875, some of the principal teachings included reincarnation and karma both of which are found in traditional religions and beliefs in Nigeria. With respect to the nature of man, the society holds that man has a “septenary nature,” that is, seven natures - the physical body, the life or vital principle, the astral body, the animal body, mind or intelligence (soul), spiritual soul, and spirit. The first four (lower quaternary) can be discarded and are perishable while the last three are the “upper imperishable triad.” The seven aspects (see Brahmeshananda, n.d) are:

- i. The physical body (*rupa* or *Sthula-Sarira*).
- ii. Life or vital principle (*prana*).
- iii. Astral body (*linga sharira*) – also called the phantom body which can be accessed by spiritualists after cessation of life.
- iv. Animal soul (*kama rupa*) – the temporary personality associated with a single incarnation which implies theosophy believes in reincarnation. This is sometimes referred to as “false personality.”
- v. Mind or intelligence, the human soul (*manas*) – the permanent reincarnating ego.
- vi. Spiritual soul (*buddhi*) - the divine ego or the “vehicle of pure universal spirit.”
- vii. Spirit (*atma*) - is the highest essence of God. It is the part of man which unites with the Divine or Brahma.

**Hinduism:** Hinduism apparently subscribes to the multi-layered nature of man. There is a major division of man into two – the ‘real’ man and the ‘apparent’ man. The real man is the ‘atman’ which is conscious, always free, blissful, and immortal. The apparent man consists of five sheaths which cover the soul or atman. These are: (1) the physical body or the physical sheath, (2) the vital sheath or the sheath life-force, (3) the mental sheath, (4) the ego sheath, and (5) the blissful sheath. Hindus also believe in the real man or the conscious soul or *atman* with

three levels - the gross physical body, the subtle mental body, and the causal body. On cessation of life, the physical body disintegrates while the subtle mental body and the causal body remain and together with the conscious soul or real man, transmigrate to another physical body to be born by way of reincarnation. While an individual is awake, the gross physical body is said to be active. During sleep and in the dream state, the physical body is inactive but the mental body is active. During deep sleep without dreams, the mental body is not active and only the causal body in the form of ignorance remains and covers the pure soul or Atman.

**Awoism** - Chief Obafemi Awolowo was better known in Nigeria and abroad as a Nigerian politician and elder statesman than as a philosopher. Awoism refers to an exposé of the philosophical thoughts of the sage. Chief Awolowo wrote extensively on issues of national, anthropological, and philosophical importance although his political positions caught more attention given he was more in public life than in academics. Chief Awolowo appears to have been undecided on the nature of man as an objective reality. In two books published in the same year (1981) he stated that “man is dual in nature, he has a body and a mind;” (in *Voice of Wisdom*, 1981) and “Man is a manifestation of three phenomena” which he held to be the soul, the subjective mind, and the objective mind (*Path to Nigerian Greatness*, 1981). Specifically, he states in *Path to Nigerian Greatness* (1981):

Man is a manifestation of three phenomena. The first is the soul which is the indwelling God. The second is the subjective mind which is the seat of man’s reasoning faculty. The third is the objective mind which can see, hear, smell, and touch ...that is the body of man (p.129).

Three issues of note from this position, first, Awolowo in his second book saw man as a unity, with the soul as the reality composed of three levels or aspects – pure spirit or the God in man; rationality which can be aligned with Descartes’ soul or ‘human soul’ in theosophy or the rational part in Plato’s dualism; and the physical body which Awolowo thought is not of a material nature given it has consciousness.

Secondly, the division of ‘mind’ into two can tax understanding. The concept of ‘objective mind’ as posited by Chief Awolowo raises questions. It is unlikely that the concept of *mind* can, by any stretch of the imagination be associated with the physical body except if the brain is drafted into the conceptualization as part of the body. Even if Chief Awolowo wanted to make a contribution to knowledge by differing from extant theories on the nature of man, use of the word *mind* as a substitute or representative of the body is problematic because one is material, the other regarded as incorporeal. Thirdly, appropriating the abilities associated with the five senses to the body appears to be opposed to Cartesian dualism which sees the body as having no consciousness. Chief Awolowo was regarded as a proponent of the idealist school in which the actions of man are but reflections of the mind (Plato’s theory of Forms). The body can thus not be associated with consciousness of the kind that permits seeing, feeling, touching, tasting, and smelling as purely physical activities deriving directly from it. Perhaps if the sage had linked his thoughts to the rich cosmology of the Yoruba race, he might have made himself more comprehensible.

**The Church and the Nature of Man** - The Catholic Encyclopaedia (2009) takes a controversial position on Cartesian dualism by stating that the effort to separate the body and the soul may not be useful and in fact is “illogical.” It submits:

It has been said that man's animality is distinct in nature from his rationality, though they are inseparably joined, during life, in one common *personality*. "Animality" is an abstraction as is "rationality". As such, neither has any substantial existence of its own. To be exact we should have to write: "Man's animality is rational"; for his "rationality" is certainly not something superadded to his "animality". Man is one in essence.

The concept of "church" particularly in intellectual circles refers to the Roman Catholic doctrines over millennia including the positions of the Church Fathers. The summary in above quote, "man is one in essence" can be regarded as the position of the church. Above position does in no way indicate that dualism is not conceivable. It rather provides a resolution to the conflict or difficulty experienced by Descartes and his followers as to the nature of interaction between the assumed two parts of man – the body and the soul. Descartes' position was that the two aspects are distinctly different and do not interact although he proposed a 'spiritual' essence for a 'material' object in the human body – the pineal gland in the brain.

Outside the Roman Catholic doctrine, the Holy Bible favours a tripartite-nature man. The tripartite-nature man is typified in the Book of 1 Thessalonians, 5.23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, the concept of body is simple – it is a material cloak which 'houses' the immaterial properties. What, then, is the difference between the soul and the spirit? The first shot is fired in Genesis 2. 7, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a *living soul*." The act of forming man the material by use of material (earth) led to an inanimate being until some energizing force was pumped into the prone figure. The force can be interpreted to mean the soul expected to predate man the material, independent of man the material, indestructible, and with the capacity to return to the source at dissolution of the earth or cloak of clay. The difference between spirit and soul is at the end of the day difficult to establish. Etymologically, the word spirit comes from *spiritus*, a Latin word for 'breath' which is reminiscent of the quote above from the biblical story of creation. This might account for the use of the terms spirit and soul interchangeably. In essence, Christian theology has not taken a clear-cut position on the nature of man. It sees man as dual in nature and the terms *soul* and *spirit* are used interchangeably. In review of the Christian position, it is important to bear in mind the foundational milieu - Judaism.

### **The Ibibio Concept of Man**

Based on above formalized and documented positions on the nature of man, the one which appears to approximate the Ibibio conceptualization of man is the multi-layered variety and specifically, the one put forward by the Theosophical Society. The Ibibio regard man as a complex being, purposeful, and part of a complex web of beings and phenomena in a complex universe. In Ibibio world view, man is composed of the following:

- i. **The Physical Body:** This is an objective reality open to the senses and factual. The body is the vehicle through which the inner man functions in the world in various capacities – as a being of itself, as a being which relates with fellow human beings, and as a being which relates with transcendental powers for designated purposes. Although the five senses are well known, the Ibibio do not link them to Plato's Forms or to Awolowo's 'mind.' The physical body disintegrates after the individual passes on although the calcified parts – the bones - may exist in perpetuity. The relationship between the body and the inner being is known. The inner being is rational and is the seat of thought (*ekikere*). It is the thought process which determines individual action and the thought process is a product of nature

- (*obot*) and, or, nurture (*ukpeb* or training) although the abstract term *obot* has subsidiary meaning. A violent person could have been so created but the nature can be tampered by upbringing, peer pressure, as well as societal norms and practices including sanctions.
- ii. **Life or Vital Force** – The near equivalent of this theosophical concept in Ibibio is with reference to particular persons who can manifest lower forms of vertebrate life under certain circumstances. The Ibibio believe that all human beings have within them a lower form of animal life (*ukpong*) but few persons manifest this and do so under certain uncommon circumstances. For instance, under severe trauma (as in losing a very dear person or when the body is physically assaulted by other human beings), an individual – male or female – can display certain traits associated with animals known to man. Common cases include some characteristics of snakes (the person crawls and dangles the tongue like a snake); lion (excessive physical prowess not known to be exhibited by the same person under normal circumstances); and monkey (agility by jumping deftly from tree to tree or rapidly consuming banana fruits while under distress). It must be stressed that this aspect of the individual is seen as latent in majority of people. Few persons are ever able to project their *ukpong* when in trauma. In a world of science where concepts of sample, population, and replicability dominate to generate certainty, the concept of vital force in Ibibio world view cannot be useful for thought. At the time they probably existed, they were more of legends than reality. This writer recalls a case in the 1960s in which a man, confronted by tax authorities, could not be subdued by four men. But such manifestation could have been due other causes such as excessive flow of adrenaline which generated unusual and uncanny strength. In any case, no such prowess in the subject could be recalled, nor did he reenact such action thereafter. Replicability is perhaps the strongest reason many of the phenomena in Ibibio land have found difficulty in attaining the status of knowledge which is regarded as certified true belief (Okoh, 2003). In the contemporary world, manifestations associated with vital force appears to be non-existent and therefore of minimum relevance.
- iii. **The Soul:** This is not a definite concept in Ibibio understanding of the nature of man. The ‘soul’ is contemporary and specifically linked to Christianity with respect to the teleology of man.

### **The Astral Body**

In theosophy, this is the ‘phantom body’ which can be accessed by spiritualists after cessation of life of a specific person. The Ibibio believe in astral manifestations as discussed hereunder.

- i. The manifestation of the inner person while alive – an individual can project self and go for astral travel to distant places while the physical body stays prone at a particular location. If the body faces disturbance, the inner man returns in an instant and resumes normal functioning on the earth plane. This understanding can be linked to the world of dreams but the Ibibio believe that some persons do go on astral travel as a conscious activity. Such persons are few and ‘developed’ metaphysically of which witches and wizards are regarded as clinical cases. But this idea tasks credibility because persons said to be witches and wizards are not known to confess to such metaphysical status. Nor do they discuss their activities - astral travel included - with any non-member. Astral travel therefore remains in the realm of speculation and something more so it induces dread. The relevance of this nature of man should be seen as suspect and of little relevance until subjected to scientific analyses.
- ii. The manifestation of the inner person on disintegration of the physical body - following cessation of normal body functions the inner person exits and can be seen by few close persons or those who have the metaphysical capacity to do so. Those with the ‘third eye’

described as *asiak anyen owo*, (someone whose eyes have been 'opened') are assumed to have the capacity to see paranormal things. The phantom body, usually described as 'ghost,' can be 'called out' of the resting place and sent on errands either for good or for evil but commonly, for the latter. Again, given the problem of statistical significance and being a phenomenon not subject to scientific study, the concept of ghost in the contemporary world should be considered irrelevant.

- iii. The idea of phantom body is strong in Ibibio tradition. This form is actually expected to last for a period and then fade away, its next destination being another physical body by way of reincarnation. Phantom bodies can be accessed even by 'undeveloped' relations in a condition of severe distress of a living relative. For instance, if a widow is ill-treated by an in-law or some other person, the widow can sit on the late husband's resting place and weep. There have been cases in the past of departed persons who appeared in physical form to execute actions of a physical nature. Believe in phantom occurrences have dramatically reduced with modernization and deeper involvement in Christianity. Besides, which Christian woman would today want to extinguish life when alternatives exist? Every community in Ibibio land today has judicial capacities and approaches to handle cases of aggrieved persons of any gender or age group.

**The Animal Soul:** Based on the theosophical understanding of soul on single incarnation, the Ibibio believe that a person not well adjusted to life is on the first incarnation. There are persons who are described as imbeciles, are simpletons, and are untrainable (*akpa ndihe obot*, which means first tour on the earth plane). These are by current scientific understanding autistic children who display abnormal mental states. This means to conceive of an animal soul in the context of persons with abnormal mental and psychomotor capabilities should be discarded. Sadly though, ignorant parents as well as lack of medical capacity has left the burden of management of autistic children to parents.

**The Human Soul:** The Theosophical Society believes man is capable of reincarnating several times and it is the 'human' soul that does this as against the 'animal' soul. This belief was common in Ibibio communities where multiple reincarnations were known. Reincarnated persons were known to return to the direct families they were during an earlier life or they joined the families of close relatives. The problem associated with alternative explanation of a child with peculiar birthmarks or deformities linked to a known departed person or children who mentioned certain issues connected with a departed person with uncanny clarity and correctness led to this belief. As in earlier cases, the occurrence has dwindled to the level of making it irrelevant in the contemporary world.

**The Spiritual Soul:** It does not appear traditional Ibibio cosmology has a concept of the spirit as a pure form of the Supreme Being. This may have arisen from the limited understanding of the concept of nature of the Supreme Being in Ibibio world view. More is written on this on the sub-heading "transcendentalism" below.

**The Spirit:** The Ibibio as briefly discussed hereunder, belief in the existence of a Supreme Being called Almighty God (*Abasi Ibom*) or God of the Sky (*Abasi Enyong*). The Ibibio however made little attempt to understand the Almighty God in pre-Christian times and immediate post-Christian era. This was because the Supreme Deity did not manifest in any mundane form to facilitate appreciation. Almighty God was inscrutable and mysterious and so the Ibibio simply gave honour by placing Him first when the deities were being called upon under whatever circumstance. When they said and continue to say, "*Abasi enyong, abasi isong*") they implied and imply order of importance.

It can be seen from above that the Ibibio ontology accepts a multi-layered nature of man as a material being and a metaphysical (incorporeal) entity. Some of the layers canvassed by the Theosophical Society are similar to the Ibibio understanding of the nature of man. Two important differences are that the term 'spirit' does not appear to have equivalence in traditional Ibibio philosophy where, courtesy of Christian doctrines, spirit means something other than ghost. The second aspect is the possibility of migration of beings such that man can exhibit the traits of lower vertebrates. Probably this can be seen as authenticating Darwin's theory of evolution.

### **Transcendentalism**

Ibibio people were and are awed by the vastness and complexity of the universe particularly forces beyond human comprehension and therefore beyond human control. However, few persons go the extra mile to attain understanding of the universe and in particular transcendental beings which they either revere or make effort to subdue. Basically, the Ibibio believe in a Supreme Being, existence and potency of gods, goddesses, and ancestors, and little or no involvement in veneration of immaterial things such as grooves and trees. The system of worship can therefore be regarded as pantheistic. Pantheism involves believe in an all-pervading and all-powerful deity or believe in many deities. The Ibibio believe in a sky-dwelling deity which is supreme and above all deities, man, and all other creations. *Abasi enyọñ* means the God of the sky, the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God. *Abasi isọñ* refers to god or goddess of the earth, in this case, a number of them, which makes the Ibibio man a polytheist. As a matter of fact, each sub-group or Clan in the Ibibio world has a deity identified with it in geographical space. Names such as Anyaang Nsit, Atakpo ndem Uruan, Etefia Ikono are widely known. (Udo, 1983). This means that unlike the Greeks with deities representing different activities or aspects of life, the Ibibio have a deity for a sub-group or group of communities with identical historical and cultural affinities (generally described as Clans). Udo (1983) lists twenty deities in the Ibibio communities and those closely affiliated to the Ibibio.

### **Relevance and Impact of New Direction on Educational Thought and Practice**

The deemphasis on the metaphysical understanding of the ontology of man in contemporary Ibibio world arises because it appears to enhance limitations for progress. If a white-necked crow flies by it continues to generate discomfort in the older generation although no one would return home for the day if a snake crossed the path from the left to the right as the person embarks on a journey. Shadows at night likely remind the older generation of the possibilities of a ghost on duty. And because juju priests continue to be in active service, it means polytheism continues. There are persons in the older and younger generations who pander to the appetites of gods, goddesses, and ancestors. Meanwhile both old and young hear stories of the things some politicians, priests, and individuals do at the transcendental realm. But educational planners and executors should face the situation through the curricula which should focus on science for the young generation. Pragmatism as the dominant philosophy of education took the United States to her present status from the days of C. S. Pierce and John Dewey. The nature of man was not allowed to overshadow reality to keep people and the society captives of the transcendental. Some universities which preclude students in the humanities from taking arts and humanities aspects of General Studies should review their thinking and approach. The Universities of Uyo and Port Harcourt made effort to get all students irrespective of course of study to be entrepreneurship-minded at a time. Such model can be used to incorporate the philosophies of pragmatism and positivism in General Studies for all students whether in the humanities or the sciences.

## Summary and Conclusion

The nature of man will continue to attract controversy based on the limited knowledge of the nature and essence of man. There are several schools of thought on the nature of man but thought has been dominated by dualism started by Plato and made more detailed by René Descartes. The Ibibio people of Southern Nigeria hold a multi-layered view of the nature of man which approximates in some respects, the concept of man canvassed by the Theosophical Society. Man, Ibibio people hold, is a complex being operating in a complex world of which the effort to understand the complexities should best be left to adepts. The multilayered attitude has dramatically reduced due to the influence of Christian thought and practice as well as science and education. Contemporary thinking and action should see man as a unit with immanent elements based on function rather than two distinct but interrelated entities. A new thinking should focus on science and philosophies which enhance societal growth and development and positivism and pragmatism would best serve the country.

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