

## 'ORIA'-MAN IN ESAN ONTOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of man has attracted varied definitions. From the Esan ontological perspective, man can be conceptualized as a 'Being in existence with others' and this describes that fundamental relatedness natural to the human person and defines culturally his mode-of-being. However, in this process, a number of questions arise. What is man as a 'being-with' and how does it make-up for the limitations of the other definitions? How does it contribute to man's value, dignity and meaning? To what extent will this make for a re-orientation of our concept of the human person and our attitude towards each other? How do we apply this African brand of humanism for pragmatic patriotism in globalization? With the critical, hermeneutic and phenomenological methods, this work studies the concept of man in Esan Ontology. This study concludes with the affirmation that impugning deeply into the traditional philosophical analysis of man which respects the value, dignity, meaning and purpose of the human person will make possible a world of peaceful relations, cultural valuation and moderate scientific exploitation.

**KEYWORDS:** Esan, Ontology, Man, being, African

### INTRODUCTION

Man is a very complex being and he is mysterious as the earth he lives in, he is created by God. Making reference to the definition of man as a: "Human nature, the human race, the mass of human beings collectively, man like, having the appearance of qualities of human being", there is no distinction between male and female from the Esan perspective where 'Oria' is man and this refers directly to the generality of human species both 'man' and 'woman' but this would not mean they singularly lack a naming in Esan language. Man, in Esan ontology, is 'Oria' <sup>1</sup>. For the Esan people, 'Oria' refers to both male and female. But categorically, an Esan male, is called 'Okpia' while a female is called "Okhuo". For the sake of relevance to Esan linguistic analysis, let us mention other few but delicate points about the Esan people such as; 'Owanle' which refers to elders.

From the analysis of time and eschatology, it is crystalized that the Esan world-view like most other Africans such as the Akan, Ashanti, Edo, Igbo, Yoruba, Effic, Afemai, Urhobo e.t.c, encapsulates a broad and exhaustive idea of the concept of life and time and this has a great influence and effect on the people in their thought and behavioral patterns or approach to the fundamentals of reality<sup>2</sup>. This forms the background for their dynamic and dual view of 'Oria'- man as a being belonging to two different worlds; the here and now- 'Enabiuwana' and the hereafter- 'Enabiazebue'. To a large extent, this gives practical explanations to why Esan

anthropology is the central reconciling point of the Esan world-view of life and time ontologically as all realities are considered only in relation to man-'Oria' who is 'Eno yan abgon' -the one who own the world; who is at the center of all things giving them their bearing and significance from his position, meaning and end.

The views of Anyanwu and Ruch, (1981) captures the concept of man in Esan ontology. For the Esan people, no conception of an existence is strictly independent of the others. All are ultimately related to a common creator and are ontologically connected. So the Esan people share from the common African view namely that all realities are permeated and animated by a common vital force, human being inclusive<sup>3</sup>. It is against this background that the above forms a periscopic analysis of the Esan concept of man-'Oria'. Let us take an extensive look at the origin, nature, and composite elements of 'Oria' -man in Esan ontology.

### 1.2 METHOD

It is an epistemological presupposition that we already are intimated with the various contributions to the study of the nature of man in African philosophy hence the researcher quickly undertakes a critical study the Esan people and their concept of man-'Oria'. With the hermeneutic method, it interprets certain deep but important concept that crystallizes our subject and phenomenologically shows certain characteristics in their cultural heritage that substantiate such conceptualization of man. Given the problematic around the concept of man in different philosophical schema, the interest of this research is to impugn deeply into the Esan philosophy and decipher the nature, origin and composite elements of the human person-'Oria' in Esan ontology with a view of contributing a better understanding to other studies on the fundamental nature of man from an Esan perspective.

### 2.1. THE ORIGIN, NATURE AND COMPOSITE ELEMENTS OF 'ORIA' -MAN IN ESAN ONTOLOGY

According to Battista Mondin, (1991) man is a kind of prodigy that combines within himself apparent antithesis; he is a fallen or unrealizable divinity, an unsuccessful absolute value or empty absolutization, an infinite or unreachable possibility. For this reason, I think that it would not be wrong to define man as an impossible possibility.<sup>4</sup>

Man in Esan ontology is '*Oria no ri wi usuagbon*' or '*Oria no ri wi agbelo*'- a communal being with-others; and he is

created by the Supreme Being. In Esan ontology, he is considered as next to the Supreme Being since he is at the central point of everything in nature. Hence the Esan believes that everything in the universe was created for him. For the Esan, man is very complex being and he is as mysterious as the universe in fact, for them, man is a 'being-with'. However, from where, comes such a wholesome conviction? One may ask. But digesting the Esan accounts on the origin of man, answers to such question will not be farfetched.

### 2.1.1 THE ORIGIN OF MAN IN ESAN ONTOLOGY

Many scholars have argued that the cosmological account of the universe among the Esan/Edo draws significantly from the Egyptian one<sup>5</sup> given that the emphasis there in are closely related to the Egyptian version, which later formed the basis of Genesis in the Bible, is that the universe was created from chaos and primeval (or ancient) ocean. After a hill (called *ta-tjenen*) arose from the bottom of the ocean and a son-god (God's child or baby god) called Atom, (which is the Sun without which life on earth is impossible) appeared on the land created by the hill. This son-God or Atom further authored the creation of eight other gods, which together with himself made nine gods presumed by modern science to symbolize the nine major planets of the universe.

The Edo version is that, in the beginning, *Osanobua* (*Oghene-Osa*, *Tu-SoS*, the Supreme Being) decided to populate the world so He asked His four sons in "*Erinmwini*" (Heaven) to choose whatever gift of nature each fancied. The oldest chose wealth, the next in age chose wisdom, the third chose (spiritual energy) and as the youngest was about to announce his choice, "*Owonwon*" (the Toucan) cried out to him to settle for a snail shell. This did not make sense to him but he settled for it all the same. The other brothers laughed at his choice as it seem stupid but for "*Osanobua*" this was a wise choice and that when they get to the middle of the water where He was sending them, the youngest son should turn his snail shell facing the water. This is made clear in the words of Osahon (2011) when he noted that:

There was no land only water everywhere and the four sons were in a canoe, sailing, drifting, propelled by the power of *eziza* (wind.) In the middle of the water stood a tree on top of which lived (*Owonwon*) the Toucan. The importance of the emergence of the tree before man on earth is not lost on modern science, which recognizes that without the tree manufacturing oxygen, life on earth would have been impossible. Modern science has also confirmed the Edo cosmology that birds, insects etc, preceded man to earth. The Edo myth of creation was earth based in scope<sup>6</sup>.

On reaching the middle of the water, the youngest son turned his snail shell upside down and the result was an explosion from underneath the water which forced sporadic eruption of volumes and volumes of sand filling up the space around them for as far as their eyes could see. Worthy of note is that this eruption occasioned the four elements of creation, "*amen*" (water) "*eziza*" (air) "*arhen*" (fire) and "*oto*" (sand or land) which is popularly made reference to by the Ionian philosophers, influenced by their contact with Egyptian thought in the Delphic school of philosophy in Egypt. Consequently, the water range was covered with Land but since

the four sons had no knowledge of what this mystifying and unusual embodiment was, they scarcely conceived of stepping out of the canoe or on the land, so they sent the Chameleon to test this content, its quality and firmness. This is why in the Esan belief, the Chameleon walks with hesitation and this verification gave the four sons a conviction that the facet over the water was safe to trend on. But unfortunately, it was the youngest sons who alone had the capacity at this time to walk on the land. The reason for this is affirmed further by Osahon when he posited that:

The youngest son of "*Osanobua*" was the only spirit out of the four sons who could have the physical human body attribute on stepping on the land, because that was the advantage of the physical or material choice he made. It was put in his hand from heaven. The other sons were deities. The youngest son, the ruler of the earth, represents innocence and so is susceptible to the powers of the deities, his brothers. These same weak and strong, good and evil, physical and spiritual, influences form the basic elements of all modern religions, with man endowed with the power to make choices<sup>7</sup>.

From the aforementioned, it is purportable that all brothers took to different parts and according to their nature, posited themselves in the various elements of the earth. Hence the oldest brother chose to take his spirit gift and live in what was left of the water while the other two brothers accepted and deposited their spirit selves and gifts on the land. The youngest soon stepped on the land carefully at first, discovering its firmness, and uniqueness, he enthusiastically, stamped hard repeatedly on it, and what followed dramatically, was running and rolling over it. Then with all sense of joy and satisfaction, he stopped, looked around and felt good and happy with his enormous gift. He called his land '*Agbon*' (earth) and himself, '*Idu*', meaning the first human on earth. He decided to walk around and explore the extent and nature of his gift. To his greatest surprise, there where trees, shrubs, birds, animals, insects, all over the land they all came out of water with the land, and the land spread out endlessly. After walking for a while pushing through shrubs; almost stepping on insects, ants and crawlers; talking to birds that appeared to be serenading him and animals that came close or ran from him, he was tired. He sat on the stump of a tree to rest, later lying on the ground, he fell into a deep asleep.

According to Osahon (2011), While asleep, '*Osanobua*' came down with a chain from heaven, looked around to ensure that everything was in place, including the Sun and the Moon that were to regulate day and night and the seasons. When '*Idu*' woke up, he was excited to find himself in the presence of a huge, soothing illumination, surrounded by darkness. The earth was dark. He knew he was in the presence of the "*Osanobua*" and avoided any direct contact at the bright lightened figure. '*Idu*' went down humbly and quickly on his knees to thank Him for the immense earth gift bestowed on him and ask his hunger could be satisfied. This he told '*Osanobua*' humbly who then asked him to stretch his hand up above his head and the sky would respond by coming close to his hand so he could pluck whatever he needs from the sky but warned him not to pluck more than needed to satisfy his hunger at a time. Responding positively to this rule, '*Idu*' stretched his right hand as told and plucked a mouthful of food from the sky and munched away with deep sense of joy and satisfaction.

"What else do you need?" *'Osanobua'* asked *'Idu'*. *'Idu'* replied, 'I could do with a human companion'? He continued 'I am lonely. My brothers are spirits and I can no longer relate with them'. But *'Osanobua'* told him in reply, 'you are not flesh and blood alone. You are part spirit too. Your spirit brothers are not far away. Experience would teach you how to harness wisdom, one of your spirit brothers, who would teach you how to combine your physical and spiritual energies to cultivate wealth and spiritual fulfillment, your other two spirit brothers.' This is why for the Esan people;

*'Osanobua'* gave the oldest son control of the waters. The Edo calls this son, *'Olokun'* (meaning the god of the waters.) *'Olokun'* represents aspects of life such as good health, long life, good luck, prosperity and happiness, to which man may appeal through ritual purity. The other spirit sons were allowed the freedom to use their magical powers to balance out the negative and positive forces of nature. To shorten the process of acquiring spiritual wisdom, *'Osanobua'* strengthened the Mystical energy with three new forces: *'Oguega'*, *'Ominigbon'* and *'Iha'*, to provide humans with spiritual guidance to differentiate rights from wrongs<sup>8</sup>.

Based on the above request, *'Osanobua'* asked *'Idu'* to take sand with both palms from the ground and stretch them close together in front of him. Following this, *'Osanobua'* pointed His staff in front of *'Idu'* at once, a female person came forth. *'Idu'* was filled with surprise and joy on beholding the beautiful female person in front of him. She smiled happily and fell prostrate in worship before *'Osanobua'* and *'Idu'* afterwards. *'Idu'* held her hands in response and gave her a warm embrace. The woman *'Osanobua'* called *'Okhuo'* (a woman) and *'Idu'* He called *'Okpia'*, (a man.). According to the Esan ontological analysis, they were placed at the center of the earth and together they multiplied in number, giving meaning to earth's resources from their point of view. As *'Osanobua'* was about to leave, *'Idu'* politely asked: 'what if we have other problems and want to reach our creator quickly?' *'Osanobua'* said, 'you can individually live for up to five hundred years, but you can come to me at will through your individual spirit self, *'ehi'*, whose double, is permanently with me in heaven. All you would need to do is climb the *'Alubode'* hill and you are with *'ehi'* in heaven, who would bring you to me'. As *'Osanobua'* left to his abode where the earth, water, and the sky meet, darkness was lifted from the earth. According to Osahon (2011);

Life was sweet and easy and before long, *'Idu'* and his wife, *'Eteghohi'*, were making babies. As the years rolled by, generations of extended *'Idu's'* family began to spread out in all directions, setting up communities, villages and towns. The different communities farthest from base spoke variations of *'Idu'* language and knew that they came from one common ancestor, Papa *'Idu'*, the ancestor of all mankind<sup>9</sup>.

Everything went well for thousands of years until one day when *'Emose'*, a pregnant woman, out of greed, cut more food than she needed to eat at once, from the sky. There was an immediate explosion and the sky began receding from human reach. To this effect, direct interaction with *'Osanobua'*-the Supreme Being from then on, became difficult as humans could no longer walk in and out of heaven at will. *'Emose's'* greed destroyed the age of innocence and brought into humanity, two new spirits, *'Esun'* and *'Idodo'* who represented various obstacles humans must now overcome to reach heaven. *'Idodo'* is the spirit who ensures that natural or divine laws are obeyed. *'Idodo'* seeks to ensure we repent and atone for our offenses.

*'Esun'* is the 'servant' spirit or angel that takes genuine human pleas, performed in the purity of heart, before the throne of *'Osanobua'*- Supreme Being. According to the Esan believe thus;

*'Emose's'* greed also brought a lot of suffering and pains to humans. Forests were soon depleted of their natural food supply, so humans began to toil hard clearing forests, burning bushes, tilling the land, planting, weeding, nurturing, threshing and harvesting. It was not easy. Before long, the lazy began to die like fowls in the desert. Farming activities began to take their toll on the ecological balance of the earth too, causing droughts, unpredictable seasons, and environmental degradation. The soil began to suffer and die from overuse, yielding less and less food despite the use of excrement as manure, which in turn caused its peculiar illness, pains and deaths<sup>10</sup>.

Two new spiritual forces of nature were now evident and critical to human survival. They were *'Uwu'* (death) the symbol of death, and *'Ogi'uwu'* (the spirit of death) representing mourning, evil omen, and diseases. *'Ogi'uwu'* owns the blood of all living things. *'Uwu'* and *'Ogi'uwu'* were causing havoc among humans. Humans who could live for *'ukpo iyisen'-iyisen vbiyisen'*- five hundred years at a stretch, were now dying prematurely. Death was ready to take life at any time, and *'Ogi-irwu'* was sending everyone who disobeyed *'Osanobua'* (or *'nodiya-Osa'*) to death, regardless of age.

To convince *'Idodo'* to prevail on *'Uwu'* and *'Ogi'uwu'* to temper justice with mercy and get *'Esun'* to take our pleas to *'Osanobua'* to control the forces, required the services of our own individual spirit called *'ehi'* personal angel or guardian angel. At the time of this weakness, *'ehi'* could no longer go directly to *'Osanobua'* because of *'Emose's'* sin, except at the point before our birth as I have discussed elsewhere. There are two aspects of man: One half is *'ehi'* which is the spirit essence, and the other half is the *'okpa'*, which is the physical person. Before birth, *'ehi'* (the spirit essence) of the individual humbly goes before *'Osanobua'* to request endorsement of the kind of life the individual would wish to live on earth (*'Agbon.'*). Hence for the Esan people as found in our discussions on Man as a 'being-with' in Esan ontology.

It is worthy of note that:

The request is obviously made with a baby's sense of innocence about rights and wrongs, and the weight of the karmic debt and credit baggage of the individual from previous life cycles and styles. However, the choice of the new life style is patently and entirely the individual's, and could be any of one or a combination of scenarios. The individual may want to be a powerful spiritualist, a rich business man or farmer, a great warrior or soldier, a happy or unhappy family, man, a wimp or beggar, a revered medicine man, a famous chief, politician, or popular king, and even a notorious or very successful thief<sup>11</sup>.

The request process is called *'hi'* and leads to *'Osanobua'* stamping his sacred staff on the floor to seal the wish. The approved secret wish is only known to *'ehi'*, who is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that his second half, *'okpa'*, (the physical human self) keeps to the promises made before *'Osanobua'*. *'ehi'* is the spiritual counterpart of *'okpa'* in

heaven. Half of 'ehi' comes with 'okpa' to earth to ensure permanent link with 'ehi' in heaven. That half is called 'orhion'. This is why for the Esan people, when *okpa* dies, *orhion* stays close to *okpa* until *okpa* is properly buried and all rites are completed. *Orhion*, cleansed of sins, returns to heaven to be one with 'Ehi' and 'Okpa' may come back seven times each, making a total of fourteen times in all. This in Esan eschatology is what is known as 'Iroso' –reincarnation. Each return that is, 'Iroso'-provides the opportunity to atone for the sins committed in previous life times. When cleansing is complete, 'ehi' takes its proper place in 'Eguae Osanobua vbd rintnwin (heavenly paradise).<sup>12</sup>

### 2.1.2 THE NATURE OF MAN-'ORIA' IN ESAN ONTOLOGY

From the above analysis, we can deduce that the question of the human person is no doubt a predominant problem for the Esan just as it is for other traditions in Africa and the world. Being challenged by the confronting realities of its nature, the Esan have also like other philosophemes asked; the 'why', the 'where', the 'how' and the 'what' of his existence. What is the origin of man? What is he made of? What is his destiny? And how does he attain his immediate aspirations? But the communal sharing inherent in the Esan community life, which agrees with the views of other scholars on man especially in Western and Africa philosophy, namely that he is a communal being, has fundamentally form the nexus of their ontological analysis of the human person as 'Oria no ri wi usuagbon' or 'Oria no ri wi agbelo' i.e, 'a being-with- others'; a community structured being

To reminiscence our earlier point for the sake of emphasis, 'Oria' as a 'being-with' in Esan ontology, is not a substance that is rational and abstractly cut off from human and communal links, isolated and alone in an island of his own world according to Ireogbu. (2000a), 'kpim' of personality: *Treatise on the human person, Respect, Solidarity, Liberty*<sup>13</sup>, and in his *Metaphysics: 'Kpim' of Philosophy* (1995). But 'Oria' is the human being born into a human community from which he derives not only existence, but also value and identity, goals and capacities to realize himself in communion with others. 'Oria' is a 'being-with-others' who are also human beings as he is, even though unique in colour, religion, culture, blood or tongue. He is the concrete existing being with other humans but with the single and primary project of communal flourishing in respect, solidarity and liberty<sup>14</sup>. Man in Esan ontology, possess a nature of unlimited complexity; he is a composite being of both the physical and spiritual realities as we can deduce from the philosophical chronicle of his origin in the above. This no doubt accounts for the wholesome conviction of the Esan people that 'Oria' is a 'being-with'. These composite realities affirms his position as the mediator between the 'Agbon si ebiwedaghe bi Agbon si ebiwewadaghe'- 'the world of the seen and the world of the unseen' or better put the world of the living and the dead. Let us examine closely the composite elements of 'Oria'-man in Esan ontology.

### 2.1.3 THE COMPOSITE ELEMENTS OF 'ORIA'-MAN IN ESAN ONTOLOGY

With an Esan ontological periscope, let us investigate into, these constituent elements forming 'Oria'- Man in Esan Ontology so as to penetrate and concretely present in exact manner, the truth of the concept of man in Esan ontology and the reason behind their concept of man as a 'being-with'. The

essential and holistic fact forming the concept of the human person in the Esan thought as presented in this part of our study, is the composite constituent elements, and the interactive nature of this physical and spiritual elements that is, body and soul, or, the external and the internal elements. By external interaction, we mean the communication between the individual and some external realities, man inclusive which in the long run determines and defines his or her person. While internal interaction refers to that communication which can rather be between the constitutive elements within the individual or interaction between the individual and some invisible being.

For the sake of emphasis, man in Esan ontology is composed of both physical and spiritual elements. The physical parts is tangible, it has form and can be measured. The immaterial and spiritual part is intangible and cannot be measured. The Esan word 'Oria' means 'human person' or 'man' which embraces both the spiritual and the physical parts. The physical is called 'Egbe'- Body while the spiritual is called 'Orion'- Soul. According to John Onimahwo's (2000) notion of 'Oya' (man) in his; *The Etsanko Traditional Concept of Man*, 'Oria'<sup>15</sup> takes on another connotation when used to refer or signify a 'man of good character', a 'hero' and a 'man of balance moral and emotional personality'.

#### 2.1.3.1 THE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF 'ORIA' -MAN ('EGBE' -THE BODY)

As already indicated, the body in Esan language, is called 'Egbe'. This is made up of tangible parts comprising of: The head-'Uhonmbon', the Eyes-'Elolo', Nose- 'Ibue', Ear-'Eho' Tongue-'Olamben' and Skin-'Efun Egbe', enable the individual to communicate with the external world. Among the body also are: the Heart-'Udu', Blood-'Aralen or Esagien', Stomach-'Ekae', Intestine-'Ibie', Hand-'Obo', and Feet-'oe' e.t.c.

The head-'Uhonmbon' generally, is believed to be the most vital part of the Body-'Egbe' because on it depend the existence of the other physical parts. The head is the center of co-ordination and the place from where the functioning of the body 'Egbe' is controlled. Peter Ali (2011) puts this point better when he says that:

It symbolizes the personality of man [Oria]. It is in the head ['Egbe'] we have the brain called 'Erhere', which controls the man, then the Eyes- 'Elolo'. We [the Esan] believe that without the brain and the eyes, one becomes a beast. The special gift of man will no longer be there. It is the brain that really makes man what he is<sup>16</sup>

According to the Esan people, the interplay between these elements is responsible for the physical fitness and practical activities of the individual, the brain (*Arere*) is the compartment where all experience both within the individual and those external to him are controlled and interpreted. The Esan people attribute the ability of the brain (*Arere*) to the psychic power. The psychic power like the physical power or energy is not the product of free interplay between, the various organs and systems of the body anatomy. By this description the psychic energy amongst the Esan people is the metaphysical postulation brought in to explain the behaviors and experience of the entire human person as a complex being. In fact, his personality.

Consequently therefore, from, all indication, the head is an integral part of what makes up the essence of the being of man-*'Oria'*. It forms the quiddity of one's personality. This we shall throw more light in our analysis of the spiritual components of *'Oria'*- man and immortality. But let us note that this explains why the Esan people at birth, holds the head in high esteem. Hence at the delivery of a child in Esan believe, the first to come out is the head. We believe it implies a bad omen should the feet come out first. But at any rate, should this happen the child is named *'Idemudia'* which means "fall standing"<sup>17</sup>.

The heart- *'Udu'*, is another vital part amongst the physical elements of *'Oria'*. Among the Esan people, the heart is sacrosactly protected. The Esan also see the heart as the citadel of life, infact it "is the seat of the vital force of man"<sup>93</sup>. Hence for them "*Udu etin fia, Uu Vae*" meaning: 'when the heart is gone, death comes'. The blood- *'Aralen'* or *'Esagien'* for the Esan people is the vital element that keeps life. The Esan believe that the blood is sacred this is why it is always sad for all when blood is spilled either through war or accident. Thus to say *'Aralen fua'*, raises fear as it symbolizes a bad event or a dangerous state of another man as his vital force is threatened. This is the reason Ali's (2011) notion of the Esan concept of blood is of great significance when he postulated that:

Blood is the source through which the manifestation of the essence of being, life, is transmitted to every part of the organism. Once the vital force ceases to vibrate in man, the functioning of the blood will come to a standstill and man's life will terminate.<sup>18</sup>

To a large extent, reflecting on the nature of *'Esagien'* or *'Aralen'*-blood, the Esan asks certain questions such as; from where does blood come to the heart, from where does it flow to the heart to pump for beings continuity? Where does the blood go when the body lies lifeless? The result of such reflection is the Esan believe that blood is sacred. The Esan believe that in the blood lies a mysterious power. They believe it is life. This belief springs from their observation that there is a bounding, a truly mysterious relationship between God and the blood of man.

In fact, from all reasonable doubt, the Esan believe that the physical body outlines a unity and all its components are equally important because they play different essential roles in the coordination of the body in the living process of man. J. O. Awolalu's (1972) expression is true of a reason the Esan attaché importance to these bodily parts when he posited that:

Africans attach importance to other appurtenances or even certain matters which come off the body. Therefore clipping of a pulled off hair, pairing of nails spittle, umbilical cord, excetera, and urine are not left carelessly about. The same is true of anything that has been in intimate contact with the body. Washing water, chewing stick, sleeping mats, shoes, foot print<sup>19</sup>.

The reason behind such attachment to certain items as succinctly expressed by John Onimhawo (2000), is no doubt also true of the Esan. For him, meticulous attention must be given to these items due to the singular fact that:

...even one's clothes are zealously guarded because the piece of one's cloth can use to cause harm to the owner of the cloth. It is interesting to note too that even at death, the water with which a person was bathed has to be properly disposed of so that magician and sorcerers might not have access to it and use it for evil purposes. It is claimed also that piece of cloth used in tying the mouth of the corpse could be use by charm makers for evil ends if not properly disposed of.<sup>20</sup>

### 2.1.3.2 THE SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS OF *'ORIA'*- MAN *'ORION'* (*'AHU'*- THE SOUL) AND (*'OKHOE'* -THE SPIRIT)

*'Oria'* for the Esan people, mean more than flesh and blood. Our point of departure in this Esan analysis of *'Oria'* is on the spiritual elements and its interaction (interaction between individual and some invisible being). Thus we can describe the soul- *'Orion'* within the context of the Esan conception, as the invisible manifestation of the individual, which both the individual in question and those around him attempt to interpret with their unitary mind set in form of self-consciousness and identification. In the following we shall discuss these basic spiritual elements accordingly.

It is appropriate to recall at this juncture that the linguistic difference that are observable among the various communities also come to bear on the name given to the soul as it is called *'Orion'* or *'Ahu'* respectively. *'Orion'* the soul, is the act that actualizes the potency of *'Egbe'*-the body. In this light, the Esan people attribute greater power and superiority to *'Orion'*-the soul over *'Egbe'*- the body. The superlative description of *'Orion'* -the soul by the Esan people is not only because of its complex function but because it is also an immaterial, invisible and abstract element that cannot be comprehended by the human mind. Although the Esan people acknowledge the complementarity of *'Orion bi Egbe'* (body and soul), there is more on the primacy of *'Orion'*-the soul which is believed among the Esan people to have existed before inhabiting *'Egbe no oria'* -the human body. As such, *'Orion'*-the soul is described as the essence of *'Oria'* since it precedes its existence. The primacy of the soul is also viewed from the perspective that it continues to exist even when separated from the body at death. It is on these characteristics of *'Orion'* that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as discussed above in Esan eschatological beliefs is built.

In Esan language the word *'Okhoe'*-spirit has various connotations. Thus, the human transcendental capacity which enable man to recall past-events, conceive of activities which are not immediate to his sense organs and which also enables him to introspect into the future is described as spirit (*Okhoe*). However, the present usage of the word *'Okhoe'* spirit refers to that metaphysical underpinning which determines *'Oria'*-the 'individuals' personality. This can also be explained over a continuous and a consistent observation of individuals' behavioral pattern. From the foregoing, *'Okhoe'*-the spirit can be described as the active force which enables *'Oria'*-the human person to participate in the universal principle of *'Agbon'*-life. The manner or mode that any individual spirit adopts in this participation goes a long way to determine the nature of *'Oria'*- the human person.

According to Idowu, (1962) the spirit is "that which gives life to the whole being and thus can be described through its causal functions its presence in or absence from the body is known only by the fact that a person is alive or dead"<sup>21</sup>. According to the above '*Okhoe*'-the spirit is recognized as the basic vital force and soul. Supporting this fact is that '*Okhoe*' resides in the Lungs and chest and is man's vital force; it gives him life and makes him work. Upon this universal truth of the human person, our analysis of '*Oria*'- Man in Esan ontology as a composite of certain elements, evolves from the dialectics of '*Egbe*' (the body), '*Ahu*'/'*Orion*' (the soul) and '*Okhoe*' (the spirit) which forms the thrust upon which the '*Oria*'-human person or Man in Esan Ontology is seen as an absolute value possessing the qualities of Life, image and good name, truth and authenticity, forthrightness, self mastery, commitment and vocation, co-operation, family and love, culture, nature rootedness, teleology and finality.

A recapitulation of the above analysis gives us the evidence that in Esan ontology like other African ontologies, the human person is a special being endowed with qualities of value, dignity and meaning hence should not be commonize or treated as an object; in materialistic terms. From all reasonable doubt, and from our own concrete existential experience as well as the origin of man in Esan ontology, it is factual that man is the central focus of everything that 'is' in nature as shown in the Esan world-view- '*irio ma re khagbon*'. Hence they say "*Oria nya agbon*"<sup>22</sup>

Man is best understood, in his relationship with the creator (God) '*Osanobua*'-the Supreme Being, with other beings; visible and invisible, with the living, dead and with nature. This understanding brings us to the fact that '*Oria*' -man is a holistic creature compoe of both material and spiritual substances and his duty is to utilize and maximize nature for the singular purpose of maintaining a universal harmony among everything that exist within. This interrelativity, affirms the fact that man in Esan perspective is a 'being-with others'- '*Oria no ri wi usuagbon*'. Thus, man in Esan ontology, is a 'being-with' others in the community of beings, where he finds his definition and identity; gain and expressed his autonomy, express and affirm his dignity, value and meaning and fulfills his final destiny.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

Finally '*Oria*' -man therefore is not only a unique, distinctive and rational individual but a communal being who dependes on '*Osanobua*' -God and other beings in nature for his well being. With his uniqueness, he is singled out, with his distinctiveness, he is special and with his rationality, he must think and act necessarily moral so as to maintain a harmonious relationship with other forces in nature, for the very sake of his well being. From this Esan ontological analysis of man, the concept of the human person therefore, is the community holding the most profound bound of incarnate existents living in common; a community of the 'I' and of 'others'. Making recourse to the epochal definitions of man as: Substance, self-conscious and communicable being, it is a truism that these are indications of semantic diffusion. Therefore for an wholesome definition of man, the ontological, psychological and dialogical qualities must not be considered complete without the quality of self-transcendence as shown in the above analysis as it express the sense, meaning and purpose of the human person. '*Oria*'- man in Esan ontology is

not only an existent in the universe, a co-existent 'with-others' nor a subsistent, but he is a transcendent being towards '*Osanobua no ri ukhun*'; a project towards the infinite, penetrating the realms of the absolute and the eternal.

Clearly from the above, it is an indisputable fact that Esan ontology or metaphysics has to some extent served a very important function of creating a condusive atmosphere for the realization of very important psychological and moral needs of the individual and community at large. It is a metaphysics that is instrumental in tackling fundamental problems of ethics and society and, as such, has been instrumental to questions of cohesion, social control, and law and order within Esan communities<sup>23</sup>. The fact that the Esan people live in harmony with their environment and the world is rooted in a metaphysics that sees this as a necessary offshoot of the individual's relationship with the forces that control these spheres of reality.<sup>24</sup> It is necessary, therefore, to ponder on where such a conception of reality, of Being, evolved and where it can be properly located.

An ample understanding of the proceeding succinctly implies the fact that there are certain characteristics, dimension, implication and problems associated with the concept of man as a 'being-with' in Esan ontology. Meanwhile it is also a fact that this research critically examined the Esan world-view, its nature and characteristics; as it permeate the Esan people and their origin. This is not for the sake of history in itself, but with criticality and objectivity as it's the interest of every philosophy of history. In this regard as I mentioned elsewhere, it is to point at the fact that although wrapped with some controversy, the fact of migration from Benin kingdom is not to say they do not have an inside culture and tradition, original and identical to them. It is upon this fact therefore, that the discussion on '*Oria*'-man as a 'being with' in Esan ontology is justified. We can therefore draw from the above an understanding of the Esan World-view- '*irio ma re khagbon*' or '*irio mah kha agbonre*', its nature and characteristics as it constitutes the metaphysical, cosmological and eschatological belief of the Esan people making clear the position of man in the scheme of things<sup>25</sup>. (V. E. Obinyan, '*Man As A 'Being-With' In Esan Ontology*' Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Ph.D Dissertation). But tracing this point further, it examined intently the African religious concept showing that Africans are naturally religious and their religion and philosophy are considered holistically, subsuming as one the physical and the spiritual, man inclusive. It also explains why the Esan world-view like those of Akan, Ashanti, Afemai, Effic, Igbo, Yoruba etc., constitutes a broad ideological reality of their concept of life forming the background for their dynamic and holistic view of man.

Hermeneutically considered, the concept '*Oria*' means man or the human person and everything in universe is considered in relation to him who is at the center of the universe giving them their bearing and significance from its position, meaning and end. Following from this, is the analysis of the origin, nature and existence of man forming his nature as '*Oria no de baewo*'-a being-with others' or '*Oria no ri wi agbelo*' or '*Oria no ri wi usuagbon*'-a being in the community. Moreso, '*Egbe*' -body, '*Ahu/Orion*'-soul and '*Okohen*'-spirit, where examined as the internal and external interactive elements constituting the nature of man followed by the basic stages of '*Oria*' -man's existence, i.e. the pre-earthly stage, the earthly and death. This work emphasized the recognition of the humancentric heritage

and qualities of '*Oria*'- the human person as an absolute value in the eyes of the Esan people such as; Life, image and good name, truth and authenticity, forthrightness, self mastery, commitment and vocation, co-operation, family and love, culture, nature rootedness, teleology and finality. It also examined '*Osanobua*'-God in Esan ontology. This is informed to bring to limelight the reality of '*Osanobua*'- the Supreme Being in the Esan world-view and its participation in the daily activities of the people and their attitude and believe towards him. The analysis in this study is the philosophical energy behind the fact that the Esan and the African people have a deep sense of consciousness and a wealth of value for "*Oria no m usuagbon*" - man as a 'being-vith-others' in the community and indeed the globe.

The essence of this research is to show that deep in every cultural is a structure of valuation that permeates the human person, sacredness of life, death, birth e.t.c. Revamping the onuses of our traditional values and ethics therefore, is an imperative as it will metamorphose into a world of peaceful, meaningful and purposeful existence as it will restore the dignity and value of the human person.

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