Disability: Inspiration from the Human Condition

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Abstract: Disability has proved to be the theoretical nature of heuristic devices to explore human conditions. The relationship between disability and human condition has rarely been explored. The first section analyzes the vulnerability and dependence of human conditions and how they affect disability through the loss of condition quality. Then it analyzes the special form of possession. The third part discusses that although people with intellectual disability may be irrational. It does not mean that their statuses of humanbeing are excluded. Finally, it explains that although disability may cause the loss of quality, it is impossible to lose the embodiment and sense of belonging to the human family. The heuristic method is used to raise questions according to three hypothetical cases. Disability is a way of representing the human condition and is of enlightening value because it helps to examine the components of our existence.

Keywords: Intellectual disability; Heuristic; People with mental disabilities; Personal vulnerability; Dependence (Psychology).

1. Introduction

It is part of our human condition to experience illness and the risk of injury, which makes us vulnerable[1]. This condition linked to our corporeity exposes us to the possibility of not developing our capacities. At the same time, it is due to the care of others, and therefore to the dependence on these people, that our lives remain in time despite situations of illness or our need to be nourished. In this sense, vulnerability and dependency are conditions of existence since they are present during our lives, that is, they are part of the human world[2]. However, our ability to cope with adversity or the needs of others may change over time.

On the other hand, the disease may produce different forms of vulnerability[3]. This variability in turn depends on age, gender and health status[3]. These factors not only reveal our inevitable tendency to organ diseases, but also reveal the risk of damaging our body due to decreased ability and disability. For these reasons, the possibility of experiencing disability, whether short-term or long-term, is accompanied by the way we humans live[4-6].

Although the term disability is widely used, there is still confusion about its meaning[3]. For example,
although it affects our health, it does not fully match the disease. In fact, disability refers to the relationship between an environment understood as an obstacle to human ability development or an obstacle to a person’s health status. On the one hand, this definition eliminates the wrong equivalence between the concepts of “disability” and “illness”. On the other hand, it reflects the difference between “normal people” and “disabled people” between “them” and “us”.

This separation usually refers to having different qualities, lacking these qualities, or the characteristics of people with these qualities are obviously different. Therefore, for generations, physical differences have determined the social structure of such differences. In this way, a “human nature model” was born, and the first and the second were not. In turn, this distinction reflects that when we think of disability, we often see it as a sociological category, not a condition that we can experience.

As a macro social category, the concept of “disabled” or “others” means that we refuse to recognize that disability has changed us and that losing quality is a part of our lives. On the one hand, rejection reflects our view and representativeness of ourselves. On the other hand, this is because we do not fully take into account the accidents and physical consequences. Similarly, this concept reflects the performance of an abstract person, because it does not take into account the changes to our body over time, nor the loss caused by the decline of our ability. However, it is necessary to mention the image of a person who is consistent with the human condition. The human condition can be read by understanding the stage of existence and disability.

We must focus on this issue because the way we conceptually deal with disability reflects how we represent and interpret the human situation. An in-depth study of this self-perception is relevant, because it affects the ethical theory that proves the nursing relationship and the basis of the rights of people with disabilities. However, our self-presentation must confront specific people, considering that we have our peculiar model of quality, not an abstract model.

Disability has the potential to challenge the ideal model of rational, independent and autonomous subjects, which is usually imagined when invoking views of human or proposing public policies. However, the absence of such confrontation may lead to new forms of discrimination based on health status or ability and quality. Therefore, a relatively full reflection on the human condition should take into account the above factors. However, it should be emphasized that in theory, the problem of how disability reveals the human situation has not been fully solved.

In order to clarify the situation of the problems dealt with, an approach was adopted, i.e. to ask questions and guess based on three assumptions and illustrative disability cases. These are based on the elements of the real story. Heuristic methods are used to deal with the relationship between disability and human condition, so as to promote a further understanding of human condition. From this perspective, disability is used as a heuristic device. Even if it is full of negative meanings, it allows to exploring and deepening the relationship with the human situation. In view of this, some people have put forward objective evidence that disability can be used as a heuristic device to explore the human situation.

### 2. Human Condition Specificity

Human existence is conditional. With regard to humans, Hannah Arendt pointed out that everything they come into contact with will immediately become a condition for their existence, which depends on certain conditions. Despite Arendt’s accuracy, the term human condition is broad and ambiguous. Therefore, it must be pointed out that this study only reflects two of the three methods: referring to the environment in which human beings live (living conditions); in the sense of human qualities or characteristics related to our bodies for
example, they become vulnerable and need support over time\textsuperscript{[17]}. Finally, it shows the belonging of the human family.

Then, considering the existing conditions, we try to specify the human conditions. Those gathered us in biological state on earth\textsuperscript{[2]}. They can be divided into three levels: the environmental conditions related to artificial products, the biological conditions caused by our material existence, and the conditions resulting from the final interaction with other humans. It can be seen that human life is “conditional”. These conditions, although not required or sought, “subordination” exists.

Biological conditions include permanent negative effects of health status and disease\textsuperscript{[18]}. This element closely related to material existence connects us with authenticity and contingency. Although negative effects do not directly make us disabled. However, it will check whether we are in an adverse health condition—for example, people with multiple sclerosis and progressive acquired dyskinesia\textsuperscript{[19]}. Disability associated with multiple sclerosis challenges one of our most common qualities: the possibility of walking. It is obvious from Laura’s hypothetical case.

When Laura became numb on her right side, she and Martin had been married for three years and her daughter was a year and a half. In fact, she couldn’t see the difference between the paper towel on her pants and one hand rubbing on her right leg. A few months after the initial symptoms, she was diagnosed with progressive multiple sclerosis. By that time, she had used a walking stick. Two years after the diagnosis, she needed a walker so that she could move around, which also made it difficult for her to manage the family and her little daughter. She summed up these events in one sentence: “In order to live, I am willing to use any necessary help.” Without them, the one who needed her husband disappeared because Martin abandoned them three years after his diagnosis.

Considering the situation described, it is obvious that our conditions are composed of inherent dependencies, because our existence develops from a condition we cannot choose. Especially in Laura’s case, temporary and accidental health conditions become obvious. In addition, the experience associated with quality decline is complex because it not only limits one’s daily activities and quality of life, but also changes personal relationships.

The emergence of this situation may destroy and change the closer emotional connection, because a person is “no longer the same person as before”, leading to self-indulgence and neglect. Therefore, the negative effects of disability not only change the body itself, but also ultimately change the relationship structure. With regard to our situation, these two factors link our physical vulnerability\textsuperscript{[18]} to the social dimension of our existence.

Taking Laura as an example, health status and relationships reveal two sources of vulnerability, namely, our physical\textsuperscript{[18,20]} and psychosocial\textsuperscript{[21]} dimensions. On the one hand, with the body, we have the unique material and nursing needs of the body. On the other hand, we are exposed to other’s behavior in a variety of types, from contempt, abuse and violence to care, generosity and love. The paradox that arises from the experience of vulnerability is that although we can all experience it\textsuperscript{[18,20]}, everyone experiences it in a unique way through their own body. Disability exacerbates this. Similarly, in terms of the limitations of body function, it highlights different ways in which we may be vulnerable.

On the other hand, the psychosocial dimension brings the possibility of damage or loss, which may be of a physiological, psychological or socio-economic nature\textsuperscript{[21]}. Laura’s case also shows that the root causes of vulnerability also reflect our dependence on the cooperation of other people\textsuperscript{[22]}, attributing vulnerability to a strong relationship. In this sense, our pain, abuse, humiliation or exclusion can lead to psychological vulnerability. Similarly, we are vulnerable to exploitation and oppression. Finally, our vulnerability to the natural environment, individual and collective choice behaviors attest to the context and relational roots of
vulnerability.

However, it must be noted that there is often bias in the way humans experience dependence and vulnerability. It can be said that although both are common, as the possibility of experiencing them, they are different in terms of timeliness\cite{1,3}. More specifically, our vulnerability will be sustained, while dependence will be related to the stages of human development, such as childhood or some stages of disease or old age\cite{1,10}. On the contrary, this view does not take into account our dependence on interpersonal relationships\cite{23}. This means that we depend on others, even if we are adults, healthy and without disabilities.

Laura’s situation also reflects that the human situation is dynamic. Specifically, it is manifested in the change of biological level, resulting in the loss of the above abilities. There is no doubt that our existence is constantly changing and dynamic. This is reflected not only in the changing environment, but especially in the biological level of our bodies\cite{20,24}. For example, our ability improves or changes over time. The ability to walk or self-awareness develops over the time span of our lives. However, in this particular mutation related to time, we are not designers.

Reconsidering Laura’s example of the human condition, in addition to the three aspects already reflected, two related factors become obvious. The first is the possibility of losing one’s ability or quality. In fact, with the emergence of disability, the meaning of “owning” disability becomes obvious\cite{15}. Second, it is related to the significance of the changes that have taken place in people’s loss of quality. People change not only because the use of these qualities may change, but also because they may lose them. However, what does this loss and this biological change mean for the human condition?

Although we can identify people by possession, because possession is a pure ability\cite{25}; disability brings a sense of limitation and contradiction. Paradoxically, our quality is “in our hands”. This paradoxical mode of possession indicates some kind of poverty, which is a manifestation of the ability to lose what you have\cite{15}. So this condition makes us find that we are not owners of our body. In view of the above, one may ask: In what sense do we have these qualities and abilities? Are they ours?

### 3. Human Quality and Its Possession

In order to begin to clarify these issues, Gabriel Marcel distinguished between possession and implication\cite{15}. Possession has a precise and strong meaning, which takes many forms (for example, owning a car and owning a stake in Fiat). In this sense, we don’t have what we usually think (basic and external) of our qualities and abilities. So we can’t talk about them as I said: I have a kind of Phalaenopsis.

This is because, on the one hand, the power is determined by a powerful person and a key existence, which means that it ultimately belongs to the former. In other words, in possession, a person owns and an object is occupied. In addition, there is the non-reciprocity of the use relationship, i.e. the disposal of the possession. On the other hand, the differences and externality of the second relationship and the first relationship are necessary and also the characteristics of this relationship\cite{15}.

Therefore, the key to an external thing—under the incarnation of matter—may be lost or destroyed. In fact, what related to this is our natural understanding of loss. Therefore, in terms of our quality, we cannot completely refer to the first feeling of ownership, because, for example, the externality between what we own and the owner is not obvious.

As for the implication, unlike the previous meaning, *quid* and *qui* do not have the nature of the former, and the latter is not material. When we mention the characteristics or features of an object, the implied meaning is shown. For example, a square has four sides. If you think about this sentence carefully, you may think of the
unreasonable use of the verb\textsuperscript{[15]}. In this sense, a square has no four sides, but a quadrilateral shape. In this case, “possession” is inherent to the possessor and qualified.

The body does not have its own characteristics or attributes, on the contrary, it constitutes their essence. Therefore, we also “own” our qualities and characteristics. Of course, we master these qualities and characteristics, but only in a limited sense. In fact, we only have what we can control from the bottom of our hearts.

The relationship between man and his quality needs further clarification. On the one hand, the possessor maintains the permanence of time, whether the possessor or the occupied\textsuperscript{[15]}. Similarly, it was pointed out that what we have may be lost. In particular, material property may be completely missed, lost or destroyed, ending its permanence. On the other hand, there is asymmetry between qui and quid: the owner is superior to the owned. With these elements, one can’t help asking how the lack of connection between the two can damage or change the former.

For example, when someone stole my Phalaenopsis, with regard to theft, I may be indifferent or deeply sad because I will lose an important copy of my collection, but this loss basically does not affect me: I am still myself. However, do the same dynamics occur in our quality? In this regard: What makes disability prove the possibility of losing quality?

4. Disability: Loss or Lack of Quality

Considering Laura’s situation again, it is obvious that a few years later, she lost the feeling of her right side and improved her walking ability at the same time. This loss effectively affects a precise function, changing her body and her contact with the world; she even changed his personal relationship. Although all these changes have not changed their human condition. I mean, even if Laura loses an important quality, she is a person like me.

Do you have any objection to the above statement? For example, for Fletcher\textsuperscript{[26]}, true humanity is manifested in 15 aspects, including self-awareness, self-control or relationship ability. When trying to define a person in philosophical terms, discourse largely depends on the psychological functions related to human reasoning ability\textsuperscript{[27-30]}. Therefore, this premise will lead to an obvious cognitive defect that people with intellectual disability and developmental impairment should not be regarded as people. These are put forward by Fletcher\textsuperscript{[26]}, MacMahan\textsuperscript{[31]} and Singer\textsuperscript{[32]}. Therefore, the objection may be that, although in Laura’s case, unless she has personal conditions, if she loses the qualities related to the use of reason, such as self-consciousness or relational ability, she will lose what makes us human. Marianela’s assumptions are as follows:

At the age of 60, Marianela was taken by her brother to a neurological product to assess memory impairment. She is professionally educated and works as a secretary in an office. Since her husband died in 2000, she has been living alone to maintain her family and finances. However, his brother has begun to notice her gradual decline of memory and difficulty in organizing words. In addition, they have noticed the decline of her work, but they didn’t complain. Neurological assessments and other tests indicate the presence of Alzheimer’s disease. Mariana’s neural system deteriorated gradually, which led to her resignation due to the loss of memory, reasoning and language skills, and entered a stage of severe disability. The deterioration of symptoms not only prevented Mariana from carrying out activities of daily life, such as preparing for dinner, but also limited her interpersonal skills.

The second objection, similar to the former, will include those who have never shown qualities related to the use of rationality, for example, by giving or recognizing the value of the existence of consent\textsuperscript{[33]}. In this case,
they will lack what they think of us as human beings. This is the case with Susana:

Susana is almost thirty years old. She is the eldest daughter of two teachers. She likes beautiful clothes, music and responding to others’ love for her. When she listens to music with her parents, she swings and throws herself into their arms. However, she will never walk, speak or read with congenital cerebral palsy and severe mental retardation. Susana not only can’t say her name, but also always depends on others. She needs to be washed, dressed and nourished.

The objection will be this: People with intellectual disabilities, if they lose or never show qualities related to the use of reason (self-awareness, self-control or relationship ability), will have nothing to determine that they are human. This is the result of the definition of the concept of “man” used by Fletcher[26], MacMahan[31] and Singer[32]. In other words, only as an entity with self-consciousness, rationality, moral activity ability and autonomy, can the one be identified as human being[27-30,33].

However, it cannot be ignored that the word “man” used in our daily life has a rich background, involving different semantic fields such as law and theology. However, its origin is in the field of drama, because the Greek word prosopon[29] (person) represents the mask used in drama to distinguish different characters and clarify their roles in drama. With the passage of time, the word has been further enriched in the context of the debate on Trinity in the fourth century, making it a major category of Western philosophical reflection[34,35]. Together with Boecio, this concept obtains an ontological meaning, which holds that man is an individual substance with rational essence[36]. Later, Tomás de Aquino added the analogical dimension of the word[34,35].

As far as people are concerned, this is related to: Man is an individual substance with rational essence. The duet is a self-blurring thing, but different from others. Therefore, in any nature, human nature is different. As human nature implies, these bodies, bones and souls are the principles that personalize people. However, these principles, even if they do not mean man, belong to the meaning of man. Therefore, in order to answer this question, it is necessary to pay attention to how the word “person” is described by the adjective “human”. This adjective determines and qualifies the person of the noun.

On the other hand, determination is necessary because it is more appropriate to refer to people from the perspective of describing people. Although we agree with Lima Vaz that man is the essence of human being[38] because it is the expression of the ultimate unity and synthesis between human nature and existence; when dealing with this problem, we must also take into account the analogical dimensions of the concept[34,35] and the principles of personalization (such as the body dimension). Therefore, it must be remembered that people live under human conditions. What does it mean to live under human conditions? As has been attempted to describe, it is consistent with the existence of development under different types of conditions, dynamics, vulnerabilities and dependencies. From this point of view, the above-mentioned qualities of human self-consciousness, rationality and self-denial can only be shown under the influence of these three factors.

What related to this is a second refutation related to the unique qualities we have as an application[15]. This model is also reflected in the phenomenology of love relationship. At this point, the special link between our personal existence and our qualities is obvious. Pascal wrote in his famous “Thought”: … Who loves a person because of her beauty, does he really love the person? No, because smallpox can make people ugly without killing people, which will lead him to stop loving her. If they love me because of my judgment, my memory, do they love me? No, because I can lose these qualities without losing myself[39].

Pascal mistakenly said that we never loved anyone except their qualities. On the contrary, the coincidence between the state of love and the object of love shows its truth. The object of my love is another person with quality. Love for each other is not for their qualities, but an illusion. As I pointed out in the case of disabled people, they may disappear or mutate over time. In other words, we know that we only love each other’s quality,
not themselves.

On the contrary, the assumption of love for someone contradicts the characteristics of the experience of love: perceiving one person with one’s own qualities and all the other qualities as a whole[^40]. This perception of human differences as a whole and their qualities goes hand in hand, so we must have them as hints[^15], because the other person I love is not divorced from his quality[^29]. On the contrary, as mentioned above, quality constitutes one’s essence. Therefore, these qualities (such as self-awareness or rationality) do not exist independently of the person you love. However, people equal with these qualities, showing an unbreakable bond, because they constitute their essence, which is so much that it is impossible to imagine a loving relationship with others without mentioning and mediating through their qualities. Although there are some qualities or characteristics that force us to define people as people, it is not for these qualities that we call them people, but those who have them[^29]. Therefore, Pascal is right to say that “I can lose quality without losing myself”. Without this person, these qualities will not exist. On the contrary, even without the performance of these qualities, a person still exists as a person.

For people with severe intellectual disabilities like Susana, their personal status is denied because they do not show self-consciousness. For example, this makes sense because it cannot attribute value (at least basic) to or recognize existence itself[^33]. This, in turn, assumes that without this positive feature, the elimination itself will not be noticed and therefore the pain associated with the event will not arise. Therefore, in this view, as a person, self-awareness and the ability to evaluate their own existence are necessary.

However, two limitations of dynamic assessment must be considered. To put it simply, the basic condition of this behavior is to exist in front of oneself, that is, not sleeping or unable to understand[^41]. Second, this cognitive ability is complex. It is not exercised in two stages of human life (such as embryonic stage, fetal stage or neonatal stage), even in some independent adults.

Matching people with their self-consciousness and ability to evaluate life, everyone, as a person who changes over time, can more or less express the characteristics of self-consciousness. This method originates from a philosophical trend, which fundamentally considers the internality of human beings to define human beings, and traces back to the difference between Cartesian way of thinking and extensive way of thinking. Together with Gilbert Ryle[^42], contemporary philosophy criticized Descartes’s dualism and believed that man is a natural machine inhabited by spirit. This dichotomy in western philosophy determines the recognizable spiritual principles or soul (rationalist) and material body (broad rationalist) in thought. Ryle’s criticism of this method is groundless because there is an implied sentence in “ghost dogma on machine”[^43].

In fact, this concept reflects a way of self-understanding. It believes that the above-mentioned qualities of rationality are independent of our physical dimension[^10], which is the condition of the field in which we exist in our experience. It must be remembered that our existence developed under biological conditions: health status and the consequences of disease are two examples. In Susana’s case, these two elements make our contingency the result of our physical existence. This proves that human survival is a living organism, so our existence develops at the primary level of an organizational dimension. In addition, Susana made it clear that, as a hint, the quality we have will depend on the exercise conditions limited by the disease. Therefore, the performance of rationality or self-consciousness depends on this biological condition.

Finally, together with Susanna, human existence is a unique thing, which transcends the universality of essence through the particularity of existence. This particularity is embodied in his stories and biographies, and in his unique way of possessing and expressing quality. Susana also proved that this uniqueness of man, due to its historical particularity, is a dialectic of distinction. These factors must be taken into account when identifying people with or without disabilities.
At this point of analysis, we believe that quality may be lost: Is there a limit to this loss? Or in other words, what qualities can we not ignore? These questions are important for the theoretical validity of the hypothetical “transitional” nature, which outlines the two objections considered. Because, according to this view, human existence will depend on having certain qualities or attributes. On the contrary, it is determined by the inherent basic qualities of the subject, and the subject itself still exists, but these qualities can be handled to varying degrees.

5. Quality that Cannot be Lost

Although self-consciousness expresses the excellent element of “man”, the quality represented by man is the body. Man exists as a living organism. Therefore, his existence mainly develops in the dimension of biological organization. Important results can be drawn from this basic condition.

First of all, we must prove that our identity is deeply rooted in the body\[29\]. The close relationship between the two words has a dual meaning. First of all, I agree with my body. It is not just a body, because the it is the starting point of our life experience\[15\]. Its second meaning is related to our existence. In interpersonal relationships, identification and recognition are crucial, in which the body constitutes the external perspective of man. It is through the face and body that we can be recognized. For example, being asked questions: Who’s Susanna? Or where’s Susana? We answered, pointing to her body. In fact, Susana believes that the experience identification criteria used by others are external.

Second, we as human bodies still exist in time\[15,29\]. Therefore, it must be recognized that this enables them to accurately locate people. In this sense, if a person only matches with self-awareness, self-control or relationship ability, rather than with physical organic factors, it is impossible to find a position. However, for people, there is no way that is incomplete, so it matches the human body. Finally, corporeity is the expression of our quality. As demonstrated by three hypothetical examples, the body brings a dynamic meaning to the performance of quality under human conditions. From this point of view, the main “condition” of human beings is the existence of the body\[4\].

This internal condition of existence is related to the fact that man is a forming reality, so his quality is shaped over time and may be lost or not manifest. However, it must be pointed out that even if these changes or disappear, we cannot lose our body dimension without leaving its existence. For humans, there is no possibility of invisible or bait free existence\[15\]. So no one is independent of his body. In view of the above, it can be said that no one is deprived of the basic qualities belonging to the human condition.

Disability makes us doubt the quality of people and proves the limited meaning of what we can call “new”. The case of Marianela and Susana shows that although they may disappear or our attention to them will be reduced, it must be recognized that although we do not always deal with others, we do not always realize that we are always human. Therefore, in the case of disability, there is an interesting quality. A person can’t lose this quality. He actually owns it, that is, he belongs to the human family.

6. Final Consideration

The human condition is not just a series of basic events and characteristics that constitute our existence. Similarly, it is also related to a set of qualities related to our biological dimension, which bring vitality to our existence and enable us to experience the loss of quality. In this sense, ability is a way of expression and a possible experience of human living state. It raises questions for us and opens up a new way to explore our
living state. Disability is therefore of enlightening value to the human condition because it helps to examine the components of existence, such as our change or dependence and vulnerability over time.

Vulnerability is inherent in humans, regardless of disability. The roots of vulnerability are related to our two dimensions: the physical realms and the psychosocial realms. Therefore, vulnerability concerns all people and all stages of existence. This is not only because of our biological limitation, but also because it can be generated in the relationship between people, and we live in a group of people who need mutual help and care. In this regard, vulnerability and dependence are closely related. On the other hand, the conditions of our existence (environment, biology and culture) are also mainly related to the body. This connection produces our authenticity and contingency. Through this connection, we find ourselves “subordinate” to the existing environment.

Disability inspires our view of the human condition because it also helps to understand our qualities. Their manifestation and possible loss are mediated by the components of existence. Disability highlights the paradox that we have our own qualities. They are inherent to us, although we do not really possess them, but we have them as implications.

Although the loss of disability quality is a major change for individuals, it does not mean the decline or exclusion of human conditions, let alone personal conditions—even in the case of intellectual disability, the loss or failure of rationality. Although there are some qualities that make us recognize ourselves as human beings, we call them people with these qualities, not qualities.

In fact, without this person who has these qualities, qualities do not exist, although without these qualities, this person still exists as a person. The word “person” may have a usage unrelated to the body. However, one must be regarded as living in human conditions. Therefore, as a developing person, human rationality can be expressed to varying degrees, or even not.

Nevertheless, disability is the evidence of our loss of quality. However, it is impossible for humans to lose the dimension of the body. It constitutes the starting point of experience and provides vitality for our biological existence. Similarly, I emphasize the continuity of existence, which richly allows us to know a person, even if he has lost self-consciousness. Disability produces a basic quality that human beings cannot lose: belonging to the human family. Recognizing this has brought us together and made us transcend our differences.

Conflict of interest

The author believes that there is no economic interest or other relationship with individuals and organizations.

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