

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz on self-control

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Abstract

The Novohispanic nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz has not been traditionally considered as a philosopher within the Anglophone philosophical sphere because her writings are primarily poems and plays. In the last three decades, only a few philosophers have engaged with Sor Juana's works. However, their scholarship has focused only on a narrow range of issues, such as Sor Juana's defense of the right of women to be educated, and has neglected other dimensions of her thought, such as her position on self-control. In this study, I argue that, in contraposition to traditional interpretations of Sor Juana's views on self-control offered by Octavio Paz and Anna More, it is better to read her as adopting a stance on self-control that prefigures a position recently adopted by Al Mele (who distinguishes having self-control from being self-controlled). In particular, I show that the interpretation that I propose is better than the others I discuss because it fits better Sor Juana's apologetic goals.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The Novohispanic nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was one of the most outstanding intellects of the last stage of the "Spanish Golden Age." Not only was she a talented playwright and poet in the *gongorismo* tradition,¹ but she was also a brilliant philosopher of the Early Modern period, who has been until recently overlooked in the Anglophone philosophical sphere.² In particular, she is remarkable for having penned the "Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz" (*The Answer*; [1691], 2009), a letter with an apologetic bent to Manuel de Santa Cruz, bishop of Puebla (who wrote under the pseudonym "Sor Filotea" to chastise her for her "mundane" activities), where she defends her intellectual endeavors and argues for the right of (at least some) women to be formally educated. Though the work of Sor Juana has attracted in the last three decades the interest of some contemporary philosophers who have analyzed how she articulates feminist themes and deploys different strategies to defend her literary ventures (e.g., Femenías, 2005; O'Neill 1998), there are various areas in Sor Juana's thought that remain unexplored or, if they have been

examined, that could be considered under a new perspective. In particular, given that many of her male contemporaries across the Atlantic were concerned about the nature of self-control in relation to questions about moral responsibility, it would be interesting to investigate whether Sor Juana embraces a view about self-control that coheres with standard interpretations that are offered of her work.

In this study, my purpose is to examine if Sor Juana maintains some specific view with respect to self-control in her writings and to explore whether this view plays a role in her advocacy for her intellectual endeavors. Specifically, I argue here that, despite holding what seem to be *prima facie* mutually inconsistent claims about self-control,³ one can make sense of Sor Juana's claims in *The Answer* by reading her, in contrast to other traditional interpretations, as endorsing a view on self-control that prefigures a position taken by Al Mele, which involves distinguishing *having self-control* from *being self-controlled*. I also argue that this view plays an important role in Sor Juana's apologetic goal to vindicate her right to study and write. I proceed in the following fashion. In Section 2, after rehearsing briefly two important features of Sor Juana's writings that have been highlighted by various distinguished *sorjuanistas*, I present a series of claims that Sor Juana makes in *The Answer* concerning self-control and I show that these claims seem to paint an inconsistent or puzzling picture. In Sections 3 and 4, I introduce respectively two traditional interpretations of the claims that Sor Juana makes, which involve reading her either as endorsing either a type of autonomism of the will (i.e., limited only by the existence of certain physical or psychological impossibilities) or as endorsing a type of determinism, and I show that these two traditional interpretations should be rejected. In Section 5, I argue for a third interpretation of Sor Juana's claims, which relies on the previous distinction between having self-control and being self-controlled, and I show that this interpretation fits well with Sor Juana's apologetic goals. In Section 6, I show that the interpretation that I propose is plausible because it helps to strengthen a line of reasoning that Sor Juana covertly deploys in order to support the project of defending the right of (at least some) women to be educated. Finally, I offer in Section 7 a brief conclusion.

2 | SOR JUANA'S VIEWS ON SELF-CONTROL: AN APPARENT PARADOX

Before engaging with Sor Juana's view on self-control, it is important to highlight a couple of traits that are important in my view to make sense of her writings, and that have been repeatedly emphasized by scholars of her work. First, insofar as she was concerned with protesting against repeated attempts of church authorities to silence her and denouncing the double standards that were imposed on her (and on other women) by the colonial society in which she lived, Sor Juana employed often irony in a very Socratic fashion as a way to disguise her criticisms of the injustices she is subject to and to try to educate her audience.⁴ Second, considering that Sor Juana has been traditionally viewed as one of the most emblematic figures of the Spanish baroque (to the point that some commentators attribute to her "a baroque philosophy"),⁵ it is important to not lose sight of the fact that, just as the baroque art is characterized by a constant tension between different and contrasting elements,⁶ Sor Juana's writings have been often seen as exemplifying a fragmented and heterogenous subjectivity in which contrasting beliefs or desires are in constant tension with each other.⁷

Keeping these two traits in mind, I turn now to explore in detail what Sor Juana maintains regarding self-control in *The Answer*. An initial reading of *The Answer* suggests that Sor Juana endorses a view that is inconsistent or even self-contradictory. Indeed, in various passages, Sor Juana appears to suggest that she lacks self-control of her actions given that both her physical nature and her social environment are such that she is compelled to either refrain from doing certain things or do certain things against her will. For instance, in the opening lines of *The Answer*, Sor Juana explains why it took her some time to pen a response to Sor Filotea:

1. It has not been my will, but my scant health and rightful fear that have delayed my reply for so many days. (2009, 29, l. 1-2)

Echoing the initial idea that her will is somehow impotent and that her actions (or omissions) are in some sense dictated by factors beyond her control, Sor Juana seems to stress at other points her lack of self-control when she discusses what has led her to write poetry and plays:

2. And, truth, to tell, I have never written save when pressed and forced and solely to give pleasure to others, not only without taking satisfaction but with downright aversion, because I have never judged myself to possess the rich trove of learning and wit that is perforce the obligation of one who writes. (2009, 47, l. 162-166)
3. My writing has never proceeded from any dictate of my own, but a force beyond me; I can in truth say: 'You have compelled me'. (2009, 47, l. 178-180)

As we can appreciate, these passages might initially suggest that Sor Juana accepts a kind of determinism, insofar as both her omissions and her actions are dictated, not by her will, but by factors that are somehow external to it and beyond her control: either by her physical state or her emotions in the case of (1), by some social pressures that she is subject to in the case of (2), or by a force "beyond me" in the case of (3). However, this simple picture according to which Sor Juana endorses a form of determinism is complicated by the existence of other passages in *The Answer* in which Sor Juana seems to suggest that she at least has a measure of self-control in certain circumstances, that she is able to choose some courses of action despite the existence of material difficulties or opposed inclinations. For instance, in a passage where she discusses the difficulties arising from learning without the benefit of a teacher and of being compelled to rely exclusively on books, Sor Juana writes the following:

4. What a hardship it is to learn from those lifeless letters, deprived of the sound of a teacher's voice and explanations; yet I suffered all these trials most gladly for the love of learning. (2009, 53, l. 286-289)

In my view, this passage suggests that Sor Juana believes that she has a measure of self-control of her actions because, despite the difficulties inherent to the absence of teachers, she willingly pushes herself to do the work of learning despite facing nonideal material conditions that involve dealing with mere "lifeless letters." Moreover, in other passages, she is far more explicit about being endowed with a measure of self-control that enables her to follow certain courses of action and avoid others. For instance, in a section of *The Answer* where she narrates different events that occurred in her early life, Sor Juana recounts in a famous passage how she was able to control during her childhood her desire for treats:

5. I remember that in those days, though I was as greedy for treats as children are usually are at that age, I would abstain from eating cheese, because I heard tell that it made people stupid and the desire to learn was stronger for me than the desire to eat, powerful as this is in children. (2009, 49, l. 228-232)

As the previous passage shows, Sor Juana maintains that she has a measure of self-control because, even though she had a strong desire for treats as a child, she was able to control it because she was concerned that satisfying it would harm her. Finally, in a subsequent passage in which she recounts how, after having taken the religious habit, she came to realize that her interactions with other nuns (and the communal life of the nunnery in general) took time away from reading and studying, Sor Juana writes the following:

6. I began to notice that I was stealing this time away from my studies, and I made a vow not to step into another nun's cell unless I were thus obliged by obedience or charity to do so; for unless I reined myself this harshly, love would burst the restraint exerted by my intent alone. Thus, knowing my own weakness, I would hold to this vow for a month or a fortnight; and when it was done, I gave myself a truce of a day or two before I renewed it. (2009, 61, l.478-495)

Taken in unison, passages (4), (5), and (6) paint a picture in which Sor Juana appears to hold that she possesses a measure of self-control over her actions. But, if that is the case, there seems to be an inconsistency (or, at least, a tension) between (1), (2), and (3) on one side, and (4), (5), and (6) on the other side. In light of this, the following question arises: given that Sor Juana claims in some places that she does not have self-control because some of her actions (e.g., her writing) are dictated by a force that is “beyond me” but maintains in other places that she does have a measure of self-control, is there a way to reconcile both sets of passages? As I mentioned earlier, my goal is to articulate and defend an interpretation of Sor Juana that enables us to make sense of all the aforementioned passages consistently. Thus, I explore in detail in the following three sections three possible alternatives to try to make sense of Sor Juana’s remarks in a comprehensive and consistent fashion.

3 | FIRST INTERPRETATION: AUTONOMISM LIMITED BY EXTREME CONDITIONS

Let me present the first alternative. Under the first possible interpretation of the text, Sor Juana is an autonomous agent who does have by default self-control of (the vast majority of) her actions, which are undertaken in normal circumstances. In this interpretation, the only circumstances in which she is forced to do something (or prevented from accomplishing something) against her will are either extreme or anomalous circumstances—in particular, circumstances in which she faces either a physical or psychological impossibility of some kind. This interpretation, which is primarily associated with the work of Octavio Paz,⁸ is supported by some evidence. For instance, after pointing that she has been forced to delay her reply to Sor Filotea, Sor Juana gives the following reasons:

7. (...) but rather because, in truth, I am *unable* to say anything worthy of you” (2009, 39, l. 12-13, my emphasis)
8. “In short, this was a favor of such magnitude that it *cannot be bounded* by the confines of speech and indeed exceeds all powers of gratitude” (2009, 39, l. 19-21, my emphasis)

Given the terminology that she uses in (8) and (9), one can interpret Sor Juana as maintaining that her failure to respond right away to Sor Filotea is not due to some weakness of the will, but rather to the presence of certain psychological impossibilities that she faces. Now, in addition to the modal vocabulary (e.g., “unable,” “cannot be bounded”) that Sor Juana deploys in these passages, the interpretation is supported by a second observation: if it is indeed the case that Sor Juana’s lack of control vis-à-vis her actions (or omissions) is due to the existence of impossibilities (physical or psychological) that she faces, one extremely likely consequence is that she should experience certain emotions such as guilt or shame as she wrestles with the consequences of these impossibilities.

Why is this the case? Proponents of the view that self-control is the standard or default (and that weakness of the will is impossible) such as R. M. Hare tend to support the thesis that failures of self-control that stem from being faced with impossibilities do not preclude individuals who are compelled to act (or fail to act) in specific ways to feel guilty, ashamed or inadequate as the following passage shows:

We saw that physical impossibility (and also such allied cases such as impossibility due to lack of knowledge or skill) causes an imperative to be drawn altogether (...) We also saw that, although the prescription for the particular case must be withdrawn, this does not prevent agony of mind or even, in some cases, social reprobation. (Hare, 1963, p. 80)

Now, when one considers the text of *The Answer*, Sor Juana does use in certain passages language that suggests (at least, *prima facie*) that she experiences agony of mind (to be specific, inadequacy) when she is confronted by the seemingly impossible task of responding to the letter of Sor Filotea:

9. Just so, I too must say: whence, O venerable Lady, whence comes such a favor to me? By chance, am I something more than a poor nun, the slightest creature on earth, and the least worth of drawing your attention? Well, why then hast thou spoken this word to me? And whence is this to me? (2009, 41, l. 34-38)

However, this language suggesting inadequacy (and the prior appeal to impossibilities) appears to be deployed as a rhetorical stratagem (specifically, as a form of irony) insofar as there are other passages in Sor Juana's text that directly clash with this interpretation. In particular, two passages suggest that Sor Juana is deploying irony when she says she is unable to respond to Sor Filotea. First, after initially mentioning the alleged impossibilities that she encounters when facing the task of responding to Sor Filotea, Sor Juana writes the following passage where she compares herself to Moses and Sor Filotea to God:

10. Moses, because he was a stutterer, thought himself unworthy to speak to Pharaoh. Yet later, finding himself greatly favored by God, he was so imbued by courage that not only did he speak to God himself but he dared to ask of Him the impossible: 'Show me thy face.' And so it is with me, my Lady, for in view of the favor you show me, the obstacles I described at the outset no longer seem insuperable. (2009, 43, l. 98-104)

As this passage makes clear, Sor Juana deploys a subtle irony because she stresses that the very thing that she said initially prevented her from writing a response (i.e., the attention cast upon her by Sor Filotea) is what in fact prompts her to write.⁹ Second, though Sor Juana states in (2) that she is compelled to write and that she only complies with "aversion," she makes clear that she enjoys putting herself (or being put by others) in situations where she must exercise her inclination for writing. Indeed, as she comes to admit, her state of mind when being forced to write is not one of agony (even when she faces difficulties such as the aforementioned lack of teachers), but rather one of pleasure:

11. I thought I should, because I was in religious life, profess the study of letters -the more so as the daughter of St. Jerome and St. Paula: for it would be a degeneracy for an idiot daughter to proceed from such learned parents. I argued in this way to myself, and I thought my own argument quite reasonable. However, the fact may have been (and this seems most likely) that I was merely flattering and encouraging my own inclination, by arguing that its own pleasure was an obligation. (2009, 53, l. 294-302)

In virtue of this, the first interpretation according to which Sor Juana endorses an autonomism that is limited by physical or psychological impossibilities should, I think, be put aside. Let us consider a second possible interpretation.

4 | SECOND INTERPRETATION: DETERMINISM

Under the second interpretation, Sor Juana does not control of her actions because those are dictated by elements that are not "up to her." According to this interpretation, her will is impotent and Sor Juana's actions (or omissions) are really determined by certain social or environmental factors (such as her health or the demands of her patrons), or they are determined by desires that she does not recognize as her own, but that are stronger than her will and somehow overpower it. This interpretation, which has been suggested by Anna More,¹⁰ is seemingly supported by a passage where Sor Juana claims that she has no control over her intellectually drive (in particular, by doubting and questioning things), and that to some degree she dislikes this state of affairs:

12. "This kind of observation has been continual in me and is so to this day, without my having control over it; rather, I tend to find it annoying because it tires my head." (2009, 73-75, l. 755-757)

Now, if we subscribe to a notion of control akin to that held by Richard Double, who writes: "Being in control of a choice seems to require the presence of the appropriate background psychological states that lead in the direction of that choice" (1990, p. 199), one could perhaps argue that in (4), (5), and (6), Sor Juana does not have the appropriate beliefs or desires that point toward the choice she makes (and that, in virtue of this, the choice is not "up to her"). For instance, one could argue, specifically, that in the case of (6), she lacks self-control because she does not have the appropriate beliefs and desires to balance in a harmonious way her social life in the nunnery with her studies, so she is forced to employ a reinforcing mechanism (the vow) to compel herself to stay away from the other nuns (to whom she is drawn by love) and devote herself to her studies. Thus, under this interpretation, her actions are not dictated by her will, but by conflicting desires that are not "up to her."

However, this interpretation is problematic in virtue of the fact that, in other passages, Sor Juana fully identifies with the intellectual impulse that drives her to study and to engage in literary and intellectual endeavors in an intimate way. It is not some alien force different from her, but rather a key part of who she is:

13. I thought I was fleeing myself, but -woe is to me!- I brought myself with me, and brought my greatest enemy in my inclination to study, which I know not whether to take as a Heaven-sent favor or as a punishment. (2009, 51, l. 274-278)

As we can appreciate, since this passage suggests a kind of fragmentation and heterogeneity of the self in virtue of the terminology employed (in particular, a division between "I" and "myself," and "me" and "myself" is twice invoked), it is clear that the passions that move Sor Juana (in particular, her love for learning and her love for her fellow nuns) are not elements external to her will that dictate her actions: the passions are constitutive of her will because she fully identifies with them. In virtue of this, the second interpretation should also be put aside. Let us consider the third interpretation.

5 | THIRD INTERPRETATION: HAVING SELF-CONTROL WITHOUT BEING SELF-CONTROLLED

Under the third interpretation, Sor Juana maintains that she enjoys self-control as an ability, but she is not a self-controlled person. This interpretation is based on a characterization of self-control and a distinction that Alfred Mele has articulated. For Mele, "self-control [...] is roughly the ability to master motivation that is contrary to one's decisive better judgement" (1987, 54). Using this characterization, Mele distinguishes self-control as an ability from self-control as a trait of character:

We must distinguish in this connection between having powers, skills and so on of the sort that constitute self-control qua ability and having self-control as a trait of character. To have self-control as a character trait is to be a self-controlled person. And part of what it is to be a self-controlled person is to be appropriately motivated to act as one judges best. A self-controlled person is disposed to exhibit control in *appropriate* circumstances (...) (Mele, 1987, p. 60, my emphasis)

Thus, to have self-control as an ability involves being occasionally able to master motivation that is contrary to one's better judgment whereas being self-controlled involves being able to exhibit this ability in all the appropriate circumstances. Using the distinction, I maintain that it is clear from passages (4), (5), and (6) that Sor Juana has self-control as an ability because she is able, for instance, to master her motivation to eat cheese since that motivation is contrary to her better judgment (given that she believes eating cheese will make her dumb and her better judgement is to prefer intellectual fulfillment to physical satisfaction). But, though Sor Juana has self-control as an ability, she is not a self-controlled person because her ability to master motivation contrary to her better judgment

is often deployed in inappropriate circumstances or not deployed when it should be, as the following passage shows:

14. On one occasion, because of a severe stomach ailment, the doctors forbade me to study. I spent several days in that state, and then quickly proposed to them that it would be less harmful to allow me my books, for my cogitations were so strenuous that they consumed more vitality in a quarter of an hour than the reading of the books would in four days. And so the Doctors were compelled to let me read. (2009, 75-77, l. 797-803)

This passage shows, in my view, that Sor Juana, despite having self-control as an ability, is not a self-controlled person in light of the fact that she is not able to exercise self-control to master her overwhelming intellectual passion, which in this circumstance is contrary to her better judgment (which is to heed the doctors' advice and rest). I believe that this interpretation (namely, that Sor Juana has self-control as an ability but is not a self-controlled person) is also supported by other passages where Sor Juana claims that her first nature (which she owes to God) is such that she is possessed by overpowering intellectual urge:

15. For ever since the light of reason dawned on me, my inclination to letters was marked by such passion and vehemence that neither the reprimands of others (for I have received many) nor reflections of my own (there have been more than a few) have sufficed to make me abandon my pursuit of this native impulse that God Himself bestowed on me. (2009, 47, l.184-189)
16. May God be praised that he inclined me to letters and not some other vice, which would have been, in my case, nearly insurmountable. (2009, 61, l. 490-492)

Finally, I believe that the interpretation that I suggest is supported by the fact that it seems to match well with Sor Juana's apologetic strategy. Indeed, since Sor Juana was criticized by Sor Filotea for pursuing her intellectual urge by studying and engaging in literary endeavors rather than merely praying, Sor Juana aims to defend herself and push back by arguing that she is not praiseworthy or blameworthy for her actions because these are determined by her first nature (of which God is responsible):

17. If studies, my Lady, be merits (for indeed I see them extolled in men), in me they are no such thing: I study because I must. If they be a failing, I believe for the same reason that the fault is none of mine. (2009, 77, l. 815-819)

In light of this, we can appreciate that, under the interpretation that I propose, Sor Juana is able to craft an argument that shows that, if studying and writing are wrong, she is not responsible for her actions because she has no control over her intellectual passion (which is, in her case, the "master passion" of her soul),¹¹ and she is merely following her God-given nature.

6 | SOR JUANA'S VIEWS ON SELF-CONTROL AND THEIR CONNECTION TO THE DEFENSE OF OTHER WOMEN TO BE EDUCATED

I believe that I have proposed a satisfactory interpretation of Sor Juana's text that shows that the passages (1), (2), and (3) are not at odds with (4), (5), and (6). Rather, these passages paint a picture in which Sor Juana has self-control as an ability, but she is not a self-controlled person in virtue of having been created by God with an overwhelming intellectual passion, which she characterizes in terms of a burning fire or a gunpowder explosion as the following passages show:

18. (...) when I saw her giving lessons, I so caught fire with the desire to learn (...) (2009, 49, l. 216-218)
19. For when snuffed out or hindered by every spiritual exercise known to Religion, it exploded like gunpowder; and in my case the saying the saying 'privation gives rise to appetite' was proven true. (2009, 51, l. 278-280)

Why is the use of these metaphors significant? I believe the deployment of these metaphors is important for two reasons. First, since Sor Juana is part of the *gongorismo* tradition, her use of mythological allusions and metaphors is not gratuitous but aims to convey hidden meanings. Thus, when she is using these metaphors, she suggests that her nature is "hot" (as that of the fire) and "dry" (as that of the gunpowder). Second, it is important to bear in mind that, despite William Harvey's discoveries, humoral medicine tenets (and, in particular, views about how bodily humors, which are generated by sexualized bodies, shape and influence human thought) are still quite prevalent throughout the 17th century. In light of these views, because women are considered to be primarily constituted by cold and wet humors (i.e., phlegm and black bile), they are taken to be deficient intellectually by nature.¹² Thus, if one is interested (as Sor Juana is) in defending the right of (at least some) women to be educated, one can pursue at least two different strategies in the 17th century. The first one consists in arguing that, because mind and body are indeed different substances, the intellect of all human beings (including women) is separate from their bodies, and thus women are not intellectually deficient or inferior vis-à-vis men (e.g., de la Barre, 1990 [1673]). The second, which is the one that Sor Juana appears to be pursuing, is to argue that, because at least some women (such as her) have a God-given nature that is fit to learn (insofar as they are constituted by "hot" and "dry" humors—i.e., blood and yellow bile), they should be allowed to study and pursue intellectual ventures just as their male peers.

7 | CONCLUSION

Let me recap. I have argued here that, in order to reconcile certain passages in *The Answer* that seem to be *prima facie* inconsistent, one should interpret Sor Juana as endorsing an interesting position on self-control (which prefigures a distinction articulated by Alfred Mele): she has self-control as an ability, but she is not a self-controlled person. I have also argued that this interpretation fits well with Sor Juana's goals of pushing back against the criticisms of Sor Filotea and of trying to defend the right of (at least some) women to be educated. If what I argued here is correct, some interesting questions arise: how does Sor Juana conceive agency given her views on self-control? If it is indeed the case that she studies because she must, in what sense is she an agent? I intend to address these questions in future work.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ For a detailed discussion of the influence of Luis de Góngora on Sor Juana, see Tenorio (2010).
- ² While various aspects of Sor Juana's works have been traditionally studied in works written by prominent Spanish-speaking philosophers (e.g., Beuchot, 1999; Gaos, 1960), it is only recently that scholarship more accessible to English-speaking audiences about Sor Juana's philosophical views has been produced by some contemporary women philosophers, primarily of Latin American origin (e.g., Aspe, 2018; Benítez, 2019; Femenías, 2005).
- ³ In a prior version of this essay, a referee raised the worry that, by offering an interpretation of Sor Juana's writings (in particular, *The Answer*) that aims to show that her views on self-control are consistent despite some apparent tensions, I might be succumbing to what Skinner (1969, p. 16) has called "the mythology of coherence", which consists in the danger of thinking that one's task is "to supply or find in each of these texts the coherence which they appear to lack." Though I acknowledge the danger, I believe that, in the case of Early Modern women philosophers such as Sor Juana, it is important to showcase the consistency of their views because one of the reasons that led to women's philosophical writings being ignored or sidelined (particularly during the late 18th century and the 19th century, which correspond to what O'Neill has called "the period of purification") was that those writings were deemed to be less coherent than those of their male counterparts. In a recent article, Ebbersmeyer (2020, p. 14) provides a good illustration of this dismissive attitude vis-à-vis Early modern women philosophers when she cites the work of the 19th century German philosopher Moriz Carriere: "Despite women's ability for ethics and aesthetics, and their sense of justice, the real and important contributions in philosophy are made by men alone because the nature of women does not allow for the production of monumental and relevant philosophical works: 'So far, in the history of the human mind, no woman has succeeded in developing a philosophical system in close correlation from one principle and setting it up as a monument.' (Carriere, 'Die Frauen', 322a)" (I am grateful to Trevor Pearce and Lisa Shapiro for pointing out to me Ebbersmeyer's article).
- ⁴ For discussions of the role of irony in Sor Juana's writings, see Ferré (1994), Cortés-Vélez (2006), and O'Donnell (2015).
- ⁵ In particular, see Beuchot (1999).
- ⁶ For further discussion of this central feature of the baroque (particularly, in the case of literature), see Wellek (1946).
- ⁷ For a more detailed exposition and defense of this claim that the writings of Sor Juana exhibit a fragmented and heterogenous subjectivity, see Solodkow (2009).
- ⁸ Indeed, Paz (1988, p. 85) writes the following passage in his book on Sor Juana, which suggests this first interpretation: "I am not suggesting a rigid psychological determinism but pointing out the conjunction of character and circumstances. This conjunction does not exclude freedom, although within fairly narrow limits; we are the critics as well as the accomplices of our fate."
- ⁹ This instance of irony, which is clearly an example of situational irony, fits well the bicoherent model of situational irony that Shelley (2001) has proposed according to which situational irony involves a concept C being coherent (i.e., being positively associated) both with a concept A and with a concept B that are incoherent with respect to each other. Indeed, Sor Filotea's *attention* is coherent both with Sor Juana's *writing paralysis* and with Sor Juana's *writing activity*, even though the last two concepts are incoherent with respect to each other. Given the bicoherent model that Shelley presents, this instance of irony serves well Sor Juana's goal of showing how the remonstrance of Sor Filotea is something that, given her nature, must elicit a response.
- ¹⁰ Indeed, when commenting on the fact that Sor Juana references her intellectual drive as an "inclination" that God bestowed upon her, More (2014, p. 134) writes the following passage, which suggests this second interpretation: "The term 'inclination', then, exists beyond human will altogether, whether Sor Juana's or others'. Indeed, its divine provenance is practically established by the very impossibility of human intervention in its processes."
- ¹¹ For further discussion of the importance of "master passions" and the role that they played in the Early Modern period according various philosophers (in particular, Hume), see Baier (1980).
- ¹² In a recent piece on the origins of misogyny in the Western philosophical tradition, Mercer (2018, p. 193) has pointed out that the views about the alleged physical inferiority and intellectual deficiency of women have their roots in the biological writings of Aristotle and the medical writings of Galen, which explained the alleged inferiority and deficiency in terms of an imbalance or "imperfect concoction" of fluids: "Women's natural passivity and coldness also lead them to be morally mutilated. (...) It is their cold and heavier blood that lead them to be less able to be courageous, independent, and intelligent. To put it simply, the human female's natural deficiency inclines them to be morally deficient." Mercer also pointed out that such views were presented in medical textbooks well into the 19th century.

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