

Chapter 2

Sanctorius Sanctorius: Between Koper and Venice



Abstract By way of introduction, this chapter gives a biographical account of Sanctorius that situates him in his social, institutional, and professional context. The chapter critically evaluates the existing biographies of the Venetian physician and complements them with my own research on the primary sources. Episodes in Sanctorius's life that have hitherto received little or no attention are discussed in more detail. This opens up a new perspective on the life and work of Sanctorius, setting the stage for the more comprehensive reconsideration of his work to be found in the following chapters.

Keywords History of medicine · Sanctorius Sanctorius · University of Padua · Venetian republic

Many scholars have written biographical accounts of Sanctorius, often composed in the context of commemorations or in lexica.¹ They differ in terms of scope, detail, and precision, as well as in their choice of source material. Some include research on the primary sources, whereas others seem to be mere summaries of the existing secondary literature.² While some provide bibliographic information on the sources they use, others show little trace of this.³ Apart from these mostly, brief biographies, there are also studies that comprehensively analyze the life of the famous

¹Mangeti 1731: 154 f., Renauldin 1825: 308 ff, Stancovich 1829: 235–59, Vedrani 1920, Giordano and Castiglioni 1924, Capparoni 1925–1928: 55–9, Baila 1936, Del Gaizo 1936, Major 1938, Premuda 1950, Sanctorius and Lebàn 1950: 23–38, Grmek 1975, Mattioli 1985: 253–62, Eknoyan 1999, Gedeon 2006: 18, 36 ff., 48 ff., 54 f. This is not a comprehensive list, but only a selection of the many biographical accounts of Sanctorius.

²Examples of biographical accounts that include research on the primary sources are Mangeti 1731: 154 f., Grmek 1975. Biographical accounts that merely summarize the existing secondary literature include, e.g., Stancovich 1829: 235–59, Vedrani 1920, Capparoni 1925–1928: 55–9, Baila 1936, Major 1938, Premuda 1950, Sanctorius and Lebàn 1950: 23–38, Mattioli 1985: 253–62, Eknoyan 1999, Gedeon 2006: 18, 36 ff., 48 ff., 54 f.

³The following accounts provide bibliographic data.g., Stancovich 1829: 235–59, Vedrani 1920, Major 1938, Premuda 1950, Grmek 1975, Mattioli 1985: 253–62, Eknoyan 1999. Examples of accounts that contain little bibliographic data are Renauldin 1825: 308 ff, Giordano and Castiglioni

physician.⁴ Moreover, biographical data on Sanctorius can be gleaned also from works on other topics, which are not always included in the literature on Sanctorius himself.⁵ The following chapter critically evaluates this existing literature and complements it with my own research on the primary sources. Wrong or insufficiently documented claims are identified and, whenever possible, clarified. Episodes in Sanctorius's life that have hitherto received little or no attention are discussed in more detail. Most people's image of Sanctorius is of him sitting in a huge balance. They know him as an outstanding doctor with a splendid career, as a genius, who, almost out of the blue, invented a new medical science that profoundly influenced the modern age. But does this image match the biographical evidence? Is it still a valid view of Sanctorius? In the following account of his biography, I try to find the answers to these questions.

2.1 Childhood and Education

Sanctorius Sanctorius (Fig. 2.1) was born on March 29, 1561, in the town of Koper, in a region which at the time was in the Venetian Republic and is today a part of Slovenia.⁶ His father, Antonio, a Friulian nobleman, had been called to Koper as a high official of the Venetian Republic.⁷ While serving there, he met and married Elisabetta Cordonina, a local noble heiress. Sanctorius was the firstborn of their four children. In keeping with an Istrian fashion of the time, he received his family name as his given name. Together with his younger siblings, Isidoro, Diana, and Franceschina, Sanctorius spent his childhood in Koper, completing his early schooling there. But soon his father took him to Venice and had him enter into the highest circles of Venetian society. One friend of Sanctorius's father was Giacomo Morosini, a descendant of a long-established, noble Venetian family, who enabled Sanctorius to study under the private tutors of his sons, Paolo (1566–1637) and Andrea (1558–1618). Thus, Sanctorius received excellent training in classical languages, literature, philosophy, and mathematics (Castiglioni 1931: 733 f.; Grmek 1975: 101).

1924, Capparoni 1925–1928: 55–9, Baila 1936, Del Gaizo 1936, Sanctorius and Lebàn 1950: 23–38, Gedeon 2006: 18, 36 ff., 48 ff., 54 f.

⁴Capello 1750, Del Gaizo 1889, Castiglioni 1931, Grmek 1952, Ettari and Procopio 1968, Sanctorius and Ongaro 2001: 5–16.

⁵E.g., Rossetti 1984, Sarpi 1969, Anonym 1882, Ziliotto 1944.

⁶In the present work, I use the Latinized version of Sanctorius's name, which Sanctorius himself used in the first editions of his works. See: Sanctorius 1603; Sanctorius 1612a, b; Sanctorius 1614; Sanctorius 1625; Sanctorius 1629a. In general, however, personal names of Italian origin appear in the present work in their Italian form. In cases where the Latin forms are more familiar or the Italian forms are uncertain, Latin forms have been used. With regard to place names, I use Sanctorius's designations (whenever possible, in English translation) and try to match historical regions with today's regions.

⁷The area of Friuli was under the dominion of the Venetian Republic at this time.

Fig. 2.1 Portrait of Sanctorius Sanctorius (date and author unknown) (Biblioteca Civica Padova, RIP.II.309). (By kind permission of Comune di Padova—Assessorato alla Cultura)



In 1575, Sanctorius enrolled at the University of Padua, where he followed the traditional curriculum of the arts faculty, which consisted of logic and philosophy, followed by medical studies. At only fourteen years of age, he was three or four years younger than the average freshman at an Italian university. The University of Padua was flourishing at the time and was a notable center of Aristotelian natural philosophy. Medical teaching there dated back to the thirteenth century and comprised three subjects: medical theory, medical practice, and surgery.⁸ Among Sanctorius's teachers in the field of philosophy were Francesco Piccolomini (1520–1604) and Giacomo Zabarella (1533–1589) and, in the field of medicine, Bernardino Paterno (fl. second half of the sixteenth century), Girolamo Fabrici d'Acquapendente (1533–1619), and Girolamo Mercuriale (1530–1606) (Ettari & Procopio 1968: 41; Grmek 1975: 101; Schmitt 1985: 1, 4; Sanctorius & Ongaro 2001: 6; Grendler 2002: 4, 148).

⁸The distinction between medical theory (*theoria*) and medical practice (*practica*) in the context of the medical university curriculum is somewhat misleading for the modern reader. Both dealt with a combination of theoretical and practical issues and their differences lay more in context, in their direct relevance to treatment, and, probably, in the amount of concrete physical detail that they presented. Thus, textbooks used for the teaching of *practica* were methodologically not necessarily different from those used for the teaching of *theoria*. What set them apart was their focus on anatomical, pathological, or therapeutic factual detail. See: Siraisi 1987: 54, Bylebyl 1979: 338.

2.2 Sanctorius's Early Practice: Travels, Relations, and Much Uncertainty

Sanctorius graduated in 1582, after seven years of study, and began to devote himself to the practice of medicine. Little is known about his whereabouts and activities over the next twelve years, up to the turn of the seventeenth century. However, I follow the clues that I have. Sanctorius mentions that he launched his static experiments—a systematic study of changes in weight, which he used to quantify the insensible perspiration of the human body—in 1584 or 1590.⁹ Thus, the weighing procedures and his special weighing chair, both of his own invention and the reason for his later fame as the founder of a new medical science, accompanied his medical practice quite early on. I will return to this later in more detail.

Writing in 1750, Arcadio Capello referred to a letter of October 20, 1587, in which the Paduan vicar Nicolò Galerio recommended Sanctorius, in the name of the university, to “a certain Polish prince,” who had asked the “very renowned faculty” to send him a “very good” medical man (Castiglioni 1931: 735).¹⁰ The original letter seems to have been lost, just like the copy Capello claimed to have seen. While there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the letter, there is no evidence that Sanctorius actually left for Poland as most of his biographers assert.¹¹ The fact that Capello did not give the name of the intended recipient of the letter suggests that the copy did not bear a name. It may have been addressed to Sigismund III Vasa, but this is mere speculation (Grmek 1975: 101; Grmek 1952: 13; Bigotti 2016: 2). According to Arturo Castiglioni, nothing in the Polish archives suggests that Sanctorius ever stayed in Poland (Castiglioni 1931: 779 fn. 10). New archival research must be undertaken to clarify whether Castiglioni's findings of 1931 are still tenable (Castiglioni 1931: 779 fn. 10; Grmek 1952: 13; 1975: 101; Bigotti 2016: 2).

Two years later, in 1589, Sanctorius was recommended also to the governors of Koper, who were likewise in search of a good physician. Leandro Zarotti (1515–1596) and Zuanne Vittorio (life dates unknown) wrote from Venice that they had had the chance to meet Sanctorius only once or twice, because he was so often

⁹With regard to Sanctorius's weighing procedures, conducted in order to quantify insensible perspiration, I use the term “experiment” since he meant his static experiments (*staticis experimentis*) in the sense of repeated and controlled observations, see Sect. 6.2.5. In the preface to his work *De statica medicina*, Sanctorius stated that he had conducted the experiments over the course of thirty years, see: Sanctorius 1614: Ad lectorem. However, in a letter Sanctorius sent to Galileo Galilei with a copy of his *De statica medicina* in 1615, he mentioned that he had carried out the experiments over a span of twenty-five years, see: Sanctorius 1902.

¹⁰“... ad Principem quemdam Polonum ...,” see: Capello 1750: IX, fn. a. “... cum Poloniae Regulus quidam ex Patavino Archilyceo Virum Jatrices peritissimum exoptaret, Sapientissimi illius Collegii Patres Sanctorium illuc mittendum unanimi sententia decreverint.” See: *ibid.*: IX.

¹¹E.g., *ibid.*: IX, Del Gaizo 1889: 7, Giordano and Castiglioni 1924: 237, Capparoni 1925–1928: 55, Castiglioni 1931: 735, Premuda 1950: 119, Ettari and Procopio 1968: 24. Only Grmek doubts that Sanctorius spent some years in Poland (Grmek 1952: 13 f., Grmek 1975: 101). His allusion to the lack of primary sources is, however, important and leads to the conclusion that the aforementioned authors based their assumptions on conjecture, or on quotations of other secondary literature.

away, but were convinced of his skills, as others were, too.¹² Thus, Sanctorius was still based in Venice at the time, and if ever he did depart for Poland, then only later. However, the position in Koper seems to have gone to another physician, Pietro Antonio Giusti (life dates unknown), who was recommended to the governors in the same letter as Sanctorius.¹³

It is certain nevertheless that Sanctorius spent some time in his hometown. He was a member of the Accademia Palladia, which represented an important meeting place for the intellectual Istrian elite. Consisting of mainly young scholars (Ziliotto 1944: 144 fn.), the academy in the late sixteenth century was especially engaged in discussions of love. In the work *De cento dubbi amorosi* (On One Hundred Amorous Doubts), Girolamo Vida (1563–91) compiled public talks held at the Accademia Palladia, including a lecture of Sanctorius's on the meaning of colors (Vida 1621: 76r–86v).¹⁴ According to Baccio Ziliotto, author of a work on the academies and academics of Koper, Sanctorius presided over the academy for several years during the 1580s (Ziliotto 1944: 144); and in any case he must have held his lecture before Girolamo Vida died in 1591. Presumably this was also the time when Sanctorius met the physician Marc' Antonio Valdera, another *Palladiano*. They seem to have been close friends, as Sanctorius posthumously published Valdera's work *L'Epistole d'Ovidio* (The Epistles of Ovid), in which he referred to him as "my such dear friend ... [who] from early youth onwards pursued the sciences with all diligence, so that he won great admiration as a most excellent philosopher, and physician..." (Valdera 1604: 7).¹⁵ Thus, besides his medical practice, Sanctorius fostered acquaintance with young intellectuals in his hometown and dedicated himself, with them, to poetry and literature.

Moreover, there is evidence of Sanctorius spending time in Croatia and Hungary: he referred in some of his works to experiences he had had in those countries. In Hungary, Sanctorius wrote, he had to accustom himself to the unleavened bread served there, and to the wine that seemed less mellow to him than the Italian variety.¹⁶ He practiced medicine for five years in Pannonia, a region named for a

¹²A transcription of the letter is printed in: Anonym 1882: 90 f. Castiglioni 1931: 735, Grmek 1952: 9, 14 and Ettari and Procopio 1968: 24 misdated the letter to 1599.

¹³Pietro Antonio Giusti is listed as a physician in Koper for the year 1589. See: Pusterla 1891: 64.

¹⁴The work was published posthumously in 1621 by Agostino Vida, a relative of Girolamo Vida. See: Vida 1621: dedication. Sanctorius's discourse exemplifies the influence of Renaissance Humanism on the members of the Accademia Palladia. Medical and natural philosophical authors are mostly replaced by poets like Vergil, Ovid, Horaz, or Boccaccio. A discussion of their opinions on colors and the metaphorical meaning of the latter are the main part of the discourse. See: *ibid.*: 76r–86v.

¹⁵"... mio così caro amico, ...; egli dalla prima giovinezza attese con ogni sollecitudine alle scienze, onde con grand' ammirazione riuscì Filosofo, & Medico Eccellentissimo: ..." See: Valdera 1604: 7. The English translations of quotations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁶"... tale quippiam mihi contigit dum in Hungariam fecessi; quia primis mensibus panem illum azimum Hungaris assuetum abhorruui, attamen paullo post, dum assuescerem dulcior mihi est visus; Similiter vinum, quod Italico erat aliquantulum dissimile mihi videbatur minus suave, itidem de omni ferculo, demum tamen acquisita illorum consuetudine." See: Sanctorius 1603: 86v.

province of the former Roman Empire and which extended over the territory of present-day western Hungary, parts of eastern Austria, and parts of several Balkan states, primarily Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018b).¹⁷ In Croatia, Sanctorius tells, he designed and used two kinds of steelyard (*statera*), a pair of scales with unequal arm lengths. One was an anemometer, to measure the impetus of the wind. The other was an early type of hydrodynamometer, to measure the force of water currents.¹⁸ The earliest biographer of Sanctorius, Giacomo Grandi, wrote that Sanctorius practiced medicine for several years in Karlovac, in Croatia, and traveled also to the German territories (Grandi 1671: 10 f.).¹⁹ Indeed, Sanctorius himself mentioned the city of Karlovac, where he made observations regarding venomous diseases (Sanctorius 1603: 163r–163v).

The lack of references to Poland on Sanctorius's part has led Mirko Grmek to suggest that he was in the service not of a Polish prince, but rather of a Croatian or Hungarian nobleman, and therefore resided in Croatia and Hungary. According to Grmek, Sanctorius left Croatia when a lethal plague was raging there (Grmek 1952: 14 f.; 1975: 101). While it cannot be clarified whom Sanctorius served, whether or not he was ever in Poland, or when and why he returned to Padua or Venice, it can be assumed that he was by then already a well-known and highly appreciated physician. The fact that Nicolò Galerio recommended him in the name of the University of Padua as early as 1587 shows—in combination with the travels to Pannonia, Croatia, and Hungary, to which he himself bore witness—that he was very probably consulted by noblemen all over the Venetian Republic and the Balkans.

There is proof that Sanctorius was in Venice on October 5, 1607, being one of the first to have aided Fra Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623), who was injured in the famous assassination attempt (Castiglioni 1931: 735; Sanctorius & Ongaro 2001: 8). In 1603, in Venice, Sanctorius published his first book, *Methodi vitandorum errorum omnium qui in arte medica contingunt* (Methods to avoid all errors occurring in the medical arts).²⁰ It was evidently well received, since further editions appeared in

In another passage of the same work, Sanctorius stated: "... audias pro huius rei confirmatione, quid mihi contigit, dum in Hungaria Medicum agerem; ..." See: *ibid.*: 92r. Further references to Sanctorius's stay in Hungary can be found in *ibid.*: 125r, 135v, 136r, 159v, 163v, 211v, 222v, 225v.
¹⁷"... quod certè mihi contigit, dum cursu quinque annorum medicinam facerem in Panonia, ..." See: Sanctorius 1612b: 131.

¹⁸"... sed libet referre quod in Croatia observavimus: erat locus ventorum strepitu, & magno fluminum impetu insignitus: incolè vero aliquando illo strepitu à somno avocabantur, aliquando vero ad somnum proclives reddebantur: proposui, ut subtiliter causam inveniremus, lance ponderari posse utrumque impetū, quod ab amicis coactus, ut id ostenderem præstiti duobus stateris, per primam ventorum, per secundam vero aque impetum, utriq; ..." See: Sanctorius 1625: 246.

¹⁹"Porro qua laude Medicinam exercuerit, dicant Germaniae loca, quae peregrinationis utilitate captus lustravit; dicant Carlostati Cives, qui operam eius verè opiferam aliquot annos admirati sunt; ..." See: Grandi 1671: 10 f.

²⁰I refer to this work henceforth as *Methodi vitandorum errorum*.

1630 and 1631.²¹ This work, probably conceived during Sanctorius's stay abroad, was dedicated to Ferdinand of Austria (1578–1637), the later Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand II, which leads to yet another suggestion: that Sanctorius was in fact in his service (Castiglioni 1931: 736; Sanctorius & Ongaro 2001: 8). Still, the available source material permits nothing but speculation.

2.3 Professorship at the University of Padua

The next period of Sanctorius's life is better documented, so that the hazy realm of ambiguity can be left behind. Owing to the success of the *Methodi vitandorum errorum* as well as to the fame he had gained as a practicing physician, Sanctorius was appointed first ordinary professor of *theoria* at the University of Padua—by a ducal degree of October 6, 1611. The position had been vacant for eight years, since the death of Orazio Augenio (1527–1603). Sanctorius was granted a six-year tenure and an annual stipend of 800 florins (ASVe-b: f. 319v–320r; ASVe-c).²² This generous salary was not unusual for the leading ordinary professor of medical theory, who generally ranked among the highest paid members of the arts and medicine faculty.²³ What was unusual, was that Sanctorius accepted a professorship after nearly thirty years of medical practice (Grendler 2002: 160, 319).

Given the high esteem Sanctorius had long enjoyed as a practicing physician, a university position with strict duties and harsh competition seems an unlikely choice for him. Apart from regular public lectures, professors at Padua usually also gave private lessons. Even during the vacation periods, they had to ask for permission to leave the city. Moreover, they had to attract a minimum number of students—and an official known as a *punctator* checked each class, daily, to ensure that they had. But the competition was tough. In Sanctorius's day, the medical faculty of Padua comprised sixteen professors of medicine, including a second ordinary professor of medical theory, who would very likely have taught the exact same text as Sanctorius, at the same hour (Favaro 1888: 1060; Tomasini 1986: index, 291–330; Grendler

²¹ As Bigotti has pointed out (Bigotti and Taylor 2017: 107 fn. 11), many early catalogues of medical books as well as many biographies of Sanctorius refer to an edition of the *Methodi vitandorum errorum* published in 1602 *Apud Societatem Venetam* (e.g., Castiglioni 1931: 750, Grmek 1975: 101, Eknayan 1999: 229). Possibly these early scholars were mistaken; in any case, the edition seems to be no longer extant.

²² Professors at the University of Padua were usually paid in Paduan florins (*fiorini*) instead of Venetian ducats. A Venetian ducat was worth 6 lire 4 soldi, whereas a Paduan florin equalled 5 lire (Grendler 2002: 22, fn. 55).

²³ Sanctorius's predecessor Orazio Augenio started his professorship on a salary of 900 florins (Tomasini 1986: 293). While, in the fifteenth century, the first ordinary professor of theoretical medicine was the most prestigious and best-paid member of the medical faculty, this changed during the sixteenth century, when the first ordinary professor of practical medicine first drew equal to and then surpassed the first ordinary professor of theoretical medicine both in prestige and salary (Grendler 2002: 352).

2002: 145, 161). Thus, Sanctorius's reluctance to accept the position is no surprise. In his inaugural lecture, he said:

Therefore, I admit that before coming here I hesitated a lot, long undecided as to whether I should accept this position which was offered to me by the leaders of this academy, or whether I should rather refuse it (Capello 1750: XIX).²⁴

In the end, according to his own words, he accepted because his leaders (*meorum Principum*) had chosen him, and because of the dignity the position conferred not only on him but also on his home country and his family (Capello 1750: XX).

The fact that Sanctorius kept company with Venetian high society and frequently visited the home of the Morosini, by then a meeting place of the most illustrious Venetian scholars and aristocrats, including Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) and Paolo Sarpi, may also have contributed to his appointment to the University of Padua. How important the so-called *Ridotto Morosini* circle was for Sanctorius, not only socially, but also intellectually, will be shown in the course of this book. The *Riformatori dello Studio*, elected by the Venetian Senate to oversee all aspects of the university, would hardly have left to chance one of the most prestigious university appointments.²⁵ The student rectors also played their part. They all wanted a star professor with an excellent reputation, who would attract students. Thus, they surely inquired beforehand how much it would take to convince Sanctorius and how receptive he would be to an offer (Grendler 2002: 160, 164).

They were not disappointed. In a letter of November 18, 1611, to the *Riformatori dello Studio*, following Sanctorius's inaugural lecture of November 17, the rectors congratulated themselves on their choice of "so famous a lecturer," who had already given a fine example of his worth and his intelligence; and they emphasized that the school was extraordinarily well attended (Castiglioni 1931: 738; Del Gaizo 1889: 56).²⁶ The university's international intake ensured, moreover, that Sanctorius's lectures were frequented by physicians and students not only from all over Italy, but also from Poland, England, and especially, Germany, to name but a few (Grendler 2002: 36 f.). As professor of *theoria*, he was obliged to interpret three classical books: Hippocrates's *Aphorisms* (ca. 450–ca. 380 BCE), Galen's *Ars medica*, *Ars parva*, *Tegni*, or *Microtechne* (The Art of Medicine; ca. 129–ca. 216 CE) and the first part of the first book of Avicenna's *Canon* (ca. 970–1037 CE). In fact, these three books are the basis of three of Sanctorius's six publications.²⁷

²⁴"Fateor equidem me priusquam huc accederem, diu multumque dubitasse, utrum Provinciam hanc a Supremis hujusce Academiae Moderatoribus mihi oblatam susciperem, an potius recusarem." Sanctorius's inaugural lecture was published posthumously in 1750 by Capello (Capello 1750: XIX–XXIV, cit. XIX). For an Italian translation, see: Ettari and Procopio 1968: 159–64.

²⁵Sanctorius's close friend, Andrea Morosini, was *Riformatore dello Studio di Padova* in 1609, 1612, and 1616. See: Trebbi 2012.

²⁶I was unable to consult the original letter due to its poor condition. It is in the *Archivio di Stato* in Venice. For a transcription of the letter, see: Del Gaizo 1889: 56.

²⁷The publications are in order of appearance: *Commentaria in Artem medicinalem Galeni* (1612, 1630, 1631, 1632); *Commentaria in primam Fen primi libri Canonis Avicennae* (1625, 1626, 1646), *Commentaria in primam sectionem Aphorismorum Hippocratis* (1629). In the following I refer to these works as *Commentary on Galen*, *Commentary on Avicenna*, and *Commentary on Hippocrates*.

In the first period of his teaching career, in 1614, Sanctorius published his book *Ars de statica medicina* (The Art of Static Medicine), which immediately proved a great success.²⁸ It presented the results of the weighing procedures that Sanctorius had begun in 1584 or 1590. In addition to the weighing chair that he devised to this end, Sanctorius designed other precision instruments to supplement his research, and constructed apparatus for the improvement and alleviation of the sick. He published some of his findings in 1625, in his *Commentary on Avicenna*. In the preface he wrote:

[...] since I hear that my pupils, coming from the most various parts of the world, instructed by me with the greatest disposition and with generous benevolence, attribute the invention of a lot of them [the instruments] to themselves: a ruthlessness that certainly may not be passed over in silence (Sanctorius 1625: Ad lectorem).²⁹

Thus, when Sanctorius introduced the instruments into his commentary, he was acting under pressure, in response to those of his pupils in other countries who had published the results of his research under their own names.

2.4 The Collegio Veneto

On May 5, 1616, Sanctorius was named president of a new *Collegio* set up in Padua that year, which was later called the Collegio Veneto.³⁰ Strictly speaking, it was an examination board comprised of the first ordinary professors of the arts and medicine faculty of the University of Padua for the purpose of conferring doctorates. Officially, the Collegio granted doctorates only to poor students who were not in a position to pay the usual fee. But in fact, the Collegio was established to allow foreign, non-Catholic students to avoid making the profession of faith that Pius IV had imposed through the bull *In sacrosancta*.³¹ For the first time, doctorates could be

²⁸In the following I refer to this work as *De statica medicina*. For an enumeration of the numerous editions and translations of the *De statica medicina*, see: Appendix II.

²⁹“... quia audio, discipulos meos in varias terrarum partes dispersos, quos summa caritate, & gratuita benevolentia docui, horum multorum sibi inventionem attribuere, quorum inhumanitas silentio certè non erat obvolvenda.” See: Sanctorius 1625: Ad lectorem. For the Italian translation, see: Sanctorius and Ongaro 2001: 13 f.

³⁰In the beginning it was called Collegium al Bo, Collegium universitatis, Collegium publicum, or Collegium auctoritate Veneta (Rossetti 1984: 374). For a list of the presidents of the Collegio Veneto, see: AAU 703: 1r.

³¹The correspondent decree used the following careful words to avoid conflicts with the Pope: “to give the insignia of the doctorate in the arts to poor *and other* students in accordance with the common ancient customs,” [my emphasis]; see: ASVe-b: 340r, Rossetti 1984: 369.

conferred by the state directly, without ecclesiastical intervention.³² This was of particular importance to the Venetian government, because it hoped to continue to attract international, often non-Catholic, students. Such students contributed not only to the Republic's economy, but also to the good reputation of its university in Padua. In the literature on Sanctorius, this episode is typically treated as an anecdote, greatly simplified, and often reduced to a single sentence. Other sources, however, reveal a fuller picture. I draw on them to expound in more detail this event in Sanctorius's life.

2.4.1 *Quarrels with the Church*

As was to be expected, the Collegio Veneto immediately provoked papal protest. As president of the institution, Sanctorius was in the thick of the disputes—but also in good company. His close friend Paolo Sarpi had been involved in the issue from the start, along with their mutual friend Nicolò Contarini (1552–1631).³³ What is more, Contarini was *Riformatore dello Studio*, at the time, as was Sarpi's friend Alvisè Zorzi (1535–1616). Thus, Sanctorius had powerful support, when resisting the nuncio's demand that students graduating from the Collegio Veneto profess their Catholic faith. Paolo Sarpi tried to resolve the issue by emphasizing that the subjects examined in the Collegio Veneto, philosophy and medicine, were not directly connected to religious matters. "Saying that a heretic is a good physician is not prejudicial to the Catholic faith," he stated (Grendler 2002: 507).³⁴ Even though curial mistrust remained, the Collegio Veneto was able to continue its work and in 1635 it was officially extended to the law faculty (Rossetti 1984; Weigle 1965: 332 f.; De Bernardin 1983: 71 f.; Sarpi 1969: 562–71). However, Sanctorius's involvement in the matter left its mark on his career—and not only in the way one might expect.

³²Until then, students who wanted to avoid the normal procedures could take their doctorates with count palatines. The count palatine degrees were cheaper and not granted on the basis of papal authorization, contrary to those conferred by the Sacred Colleges of doctors of law and arts. The count palatines did not insist on an oath of allegiance to Catholicism. In the late sixteenth century, however, most heterodox students chose this route, which was much to the dislike of the University. Thus, in 1612 the Venetian Senate deprived the count palatines of their privilege to confer doctorates in the Venetian state (Grendler 2002: 173 fn. 102, 183–6, Rossetti 1984: 366 ff.).

³³The close relationship between Sanctorius and Nicolò Contarini is attested by Sanctorius's dedication of his work *De statica medicina* to him, in which he referred to their forty years of acquaintance (Sanctorius 1614: dedication).

³⁴"... dicendo che un heretico sia un buon medico, non si pregiudica alla fede catholica." See: Grendler 2002: 507, fn. 119, Rossetti 1984: 373.

2.4.2 *Quarrels with the German Nation of Artists*

At first, things seemed to be going well. In 1617, after completing his six years at the university, Sanctorius was reappointed by the Senate with a pay increase of 400 florins per annum (ASVe-b: 342v; ASVe-f).³⁵ But trouble soon raised its head. Already in 1618, dissatisfaction arose because Sanctorius was absent from the doctoral degree award ceremony in the Collegio Veneto. The proceedings of the German Nation of Artists, the association of philosophy, medicine, and theology students of the University of Padua, reported that Cesare Cremonini (1550–1631) and Rodrigo Fonseca (1550–1622), namely the other two first ordinary chairs of the arts and medicine faculty, had granted three students their doctorate in the absence of Sanctorius. The latter was not amused and stated: “Your doctorate is not worth much; I, not Cremonini, am the president” (Rossetti 1967: 64).³⁶ Therefore, the students had to present themselves again before the professors and members of the Nation to publicly receive their doctoral degree from Sanctorius. This episode shows, on the one hand, Sanctorius’s insistence on executing his role as president and, on the other, the disapproval that his behaviour provoked in the German Nation. According to them, Sanctorius himself had decided not to take part in the initial graduation ceremony, preferring instead to pursue lucrative business in Venice. His subsequent complaints evoked little sympathy among the German students, who then decided to stay away from his next lectures. This conflict should not be underestimated. In terms of their number, activity, and prestige, German students played a preeminent role at the University of Padua. Moreover, many of them were Protestant and pursued their degree at the Collegio Veneto (Rossetti 1967: IX, 63 ff.; Grendler 2002: 193).

How important the presidency of the Collegio Veneto was for Sanctorius is shown in another passage from the proceedings. In 1619, when his term of office as president came to an end, he tried to extend it—and did not shy away from bringing up the matter before the Venetian Senate. Even though he did not succeed and a new president, Rodrigo Fonseca, was elected, Sanctorius was given a second chance. Fonseca died in the spring of 1622 and Sanctorius was called upon to succeed him provisionally, until the end of the period required in law for a presidential election

³⁵ Gaetano and Luisa Cozzi emphasized that twenty senators voted against Sanctorius’s reappointment. They saw this as proof that some senators shared the preoccupations of the Holy See and of the nuncio regarding Sanctorius’s conferral of doctorates without the profession of faith (Sarpi 1969: 571, ASVe-f). What they did not take into account, however, is that ca. thirty voted against Sanctorius’s first appointment in 1611, which corresponded to ca. one third of the Senate, see: ASVe-c, ASVe-b: f. 319v–320r. Thus, there is no proof that he lost support in the Senate due to his presidency of the Collegio Veneto, just as it is not known whether the senators who voted against his reappointment in 1617 did so in solidarity with the Holy See. On the contrary, it seems that Sanctorius gained support in the Senate during his first period of teaching in Padua. Corrections in the original senatorial document suggest that the pay raise was adjusted upwards from 300 to 400 florins. It is not known, however, whether this was the outcome of negotiations or simply a typographical mistake. See: ASVe-f.

³⁶ “Il tuo doctorato non val tanto, ego praeses sum, non Cremoninus, etc.” See: Rossetti 1967: 64.

(Rossetti 1967: 79; 1984: 374 f.; AAU 703: 1r, 130r). A few months later, new allegations were made. Busy again with his medical practice in Venice, Sanctorius had been unable to attend the graduation ceremony of a student, the librarian at the German Nation of Artists' library,³⁷ and had himself proposed, this time, that the doctorate be awarded in his absence. According to the students, this flew in the face of opinion among the *Riformatori dello Studio* and, what is more, it reduced the value of their doctorates. They complained first to Sanctorius, but when this did not have the desired effect, they went a step further and reported the matter to the *Riformatori dello Studio*. The *Riformatori* took the criticism seriously, but the students had to wait until 1624 before Sanctorius was replaced as president of the Collegio Veneto by Giovanni Colle (1558–1631) (Rossetti 1967: 147–50, 173 f.; 1984: 375; AAU 703: 1r).

In that same year, 1624, Sanctorius's second term as first ordinary professor of medical theory came to an end. Moreover, as Sanctorius's biographer Capello claims, new allegations that Sanctorius was neglecting his office soon landed him in court. However, he was acquitted on February 8. According to Capello, the records of the case can be found in the proceedings of the Paduan Curia; but these seem now to be lost.³⁸ The issue was possibly linked to the death of Sanctorius's nephew, as a statement by Sanctorius later that same year attests: "I did not miss a single lesson in recent years, except last year, owing to the death of my nephew and son" (Ettari & Procopio 1968: 147).³⁹ Be this as it may, the recurrent complaints show, in my opinion, that Sanctorius's travels to Venice and his medical practice there made him neglect his professorial duties. But the administration of the University of Padua carefully monitored the professors and paid heed to the students' opinions. Teachers whom students considered unfavorably as not very diligent were not reappointed. This was the fate of Sanctorius, too. But in his case, things are more complicated than they seem (Capello 1750: XII, XII fn. c; Castiglioni 1931: 738 f.; Ettari & Procopio 1968: 29, 39 n. 50).

³⁷At the University of Padua, the German Nation of Artists had a library from 1586 onward, whereas the university library was only established around 1631. See: Grendler 2002: 505 fn. 111, 506.

³⁸It seems that Capello was the only biographer of Sanctorius who saw the records of the case, because all later authors referred to his work.

³⁹"... non ho in questi anni preterita alcuna letione se non che quest'ultimo anno per la morte di un mio nepote et figlio" See: Ettari and Procopio 1968: 147. I was unable to find the original in the archives. *Figlio* (son) is used here affectionately; there is no evidence that Sanctorius had children of his own.

2.5 Failed Reappointment and Resignation

On January 20, 1624, two of the three *Riformatori dello Studio*, Antonio Barbaro (1565–1630) and the aforementioned Nicolò Contarini, proposed before the Senate that Sanctorius be reappointed, and were full of praise for him. They further suggested a pay raise of 300 florins per annum. The Senate did not agree: ninety-four members voted against the proposition, only thirty-five voted in its favour, and fifty-seven abstained (ASVe-b: 372v; ASVe-d). Given the German students' many complaints about Sanctorius, it seems surprising that the *Riformatori dello Studio* were so supportive of him. But not quite so surprising, when one considers who was on the examination board at the time. The friendship with Nicolò Contarini may well have played its part. Moreover, the students were not completely innocent either. Already around 1615, Sanctorius had written in a letter to Contarini that the “audience did not allow for ordinary lectures” (BMCVe-b: f. 193).⁴⁰ This touched on a broader problem. Since the late sixteenth century, the Italian universities had been struggling both with the failure of matriculated students to attend classes and with an increase in student violence (Grendler 2002: 477–508). Regardless of whether or not Sanctorius's students actually showed up or disrupted his teaching, this episode shows that the complaints against their professor could be made also about themselves. It must also be recalled that it was his students' plagiarism which first drove Sanctorius to publish illustrations of his instruments. But there is still more to it than that.

A few months later, Sanctorius's successor was elected: Pompeo Caimo (1568–1631). He was the personal physician of Alessandro Peretti (1571–1623), then one of the most influential cardinals of the Curia in Rome. The Venetian ambassador to Rome, Pietro Contarini (1541–1613), recommended him to the University of Padua. As a result, Antonio Barbaro and Giovanni Corner (1551–1629) proposed him to the Senate. What united these men was that they were all closely aligned with the Pope. Caimo was appointed to the professorship without a single dissenting vote. Not even Nicolò Contarini objected. Yet, as Gaetano and Luisa Cozzi suggest, he could easily have abstained from voting, just as his friends did (Sarpi 1969: 571 f.; ASVe-b: 373r–374r).⁴¹ Did Sanctorius's anticlerical behavior as president of the Collegio Veneto cost him his professorship? Did his friendship with Sarpi, Contarini, and other Venetian patricians among the so-called *giovani* (youths) put an end to his university career?⁴² Or was it rather his neglect of his duties and the displeasure of his students?

⁴⁰“Heri die sabbati videlicet nostri auditores non permiserunt ordinarias lectiones,” See: BMCVe-b: f. 193. The letter bears no indication of the year, but as Sanctorius referred to a lecture by Francesco Pola Veronese, who was appointed to the University of Padua in 1615 and died a year later, it can be assumed that it was written in 1615 or 1616. See also: Del Gaizo 1889: 56.

⁴¹Pompeo Caimo was elected by ninety-one yea votes, with no dissenting votes or abstentions. See: ASVe-b: 373r–374r.

⁴²The so-called *giovani* were a politically motivated group, consisting of mostly young Venetian patricians who distinguished themselves through their innovative ideas and their critical view of the Church and the Pope. See: Cozzi 1979: 140 f. For more information on the topic, see also: Cozzi 1958: ch. 1.

Interestingly, most of Sanctorius's biographers tell yet another tale, namely that it was Sanctorius's personal decision to give up teaching.⁴³ And indeed, there is some truth to this. In the preface to his *Commentary on Avicenna*, published in 1625, Sanctorius stated that he "requested the liberty on March 5, 1624, from the most excellent moderators, so that the not small trouble of those, who burdened [him] much because of this one affair, might be lifted ..." (Sanctorius 1625: Ad lectorem).⁴⁴ He explained that he would like to retire in Venice where, once freed from teaching, he would reissue his previously published books and complete and publish his unfinished works as well as new work of his own (Sanctorius 1625: Ad lectorem). "This one affair" may well refer to the pending prosecution of Sanctorius, which was to lead him, he tells us, to resign his professorship. In his letter of resignation, however, Sanctorius claims that the Senate's refusal to grant him the 300 florin pay raise is the cause (Ettari & Procopio 1968: 147 f.).⁴⁵ Possibly the two factors were connected. For although Sanctorius was publicly declared innocent, the allegations surely had an impact on his reputation and the esteem he enjoyed in the Senate. Under these circumstances, a pay raise might have been considered inappropriate.

While Sanctorius and many of his biographers emphasized that he personally decided to resign, it rather seems that he preempted the inevitable outcome. He tried to limit the damage.⁴⁶ In fact, the Senate voted in January 1624, not only against his pay raise—but against his reappointment, too.⁴⁷ Sanctorius argued that all of his predecessors had received a pay raise with each new reappointment. His colleague, Cesare Cremonini, and his rival (*concorrente*), Niccolò Trivisano (life dates unknown) had both recently received a wage increase. What is more, with his medical practice in Venice alone, he could earn as much as 3000 ducats per year. This, and the fact that his teaching was very popular and attracted scholars to the university,

⁴³E.g., Castiglioni 1931: 739 f., Major 1938: 376, Premuda 1950: 119, Grmek 1975: 103, Sanctorius and Ongaro 2001: 13.

⁴⁴"licentiam die quinta Martij 1624 petij ab Excellentissimis Moderatoribus, ut levatus non levi molestia illorum, qui mihi propter hoc onus negotium valde facescebant, ..." See: Sanctorius 1625: Ad lectorem.

⁴⁵I was unable to find the original letter of resignation in the archives. For a transcription of the document, see: Ettari and Procopio 1968: 147 f.

⁴⁶In a letter from April 1624, Johan Rode (ca. 1587–1659), member of the German Nation of Artists of the University of Padua, informed Caspar Hofmann (1572–1648), professor for theoretical medicine in Altdorf (Nuremberg), that Sanctorius declined the professorship of theoretical medicine to preempt a decision of the Senate. Interestingly, Rode wrote in the next sentence that Hofmann could take a look at a piece of writing testifying that Sanctorius was not rejected. Given the senatorial decree in January of the same year, one cannot but wonder which writing Rode was referring to. See: Rode to Hofmann 1624.

⁴⁷As the proposition connected Sanctorius's reappointment with a pay raise of 300 florins, the outcome of the election was a refusal of both, the reappointment and the pay raise. There is no indication that a further vote took place on only one of the two issues.

made him unable to consider continuing his professorship without the pay increase of 300 florins (ASVe-d; Ettari & Procopio 1968: 148). His reaction could not have come as a surprise to the senators. To what extent their decision was shaped by the displeasure of the students, the neglect of his duties, or his involvement in the Collegio Veneto and Paolo Sarpi's circle remains an open question. Most likely it was a combination of all of these.

In the light of the above, the idea usually advanced by Sanctorius's biographers, that the Senate decreed to grant Sanctorius life-long tenure on a full stipend, must be taken with a pinch of salt. It can be traced back to Niccolò Papadopoli (1655–1740), an early historian of the University of Padua, whose work has, however, been proved to contain inaccuracies. On the title page of Sanctorius's first publication after he left Padua, we read "once professor of theoretical medicine," which implies that he had had to give up his title.⁴⁸ In any case, his prosperous medical practice and the powerful connections that he still had among the Venetian patriciate surely allowed him to live without financial worries.⁴⁹ By now, Sanctorius's name was famous throughout Europe and Capello claims that he received offers from the Universities of Bologna, Pavia, and Messi, but did not accept them (Capello 1750: XIII; Burrow 1763).

2.6 Retirement in Venice: The Continuation of a Busy Life

Venice, a place Sanctorius had gravitated toward since his childhood, appears to have become his second home. Besides his many friendships and acquaintances, there was also his professional connection to the *Serenissima*. In June 1612, shortly after Sanctorius had become professor in Padua, he became a member of the Collegio dei Medici/ Fisici di Venezia (College of Physicians of Venice) (BNMVe: f. 28v). This was a highly distinguished institution, because Venice attracted the most competent physicians, owing to the high rewards of medical practice in the city and the opportunities provided by the Venetian press. What is more, while Colleges of Physicians elsewhere in Italy became increasingly exclusive when the profession expanded in the sixteenth century, the Venetian College retained its cosmopolitan character and also attracted distinguished physicians from all over Italy. Membership in the Venetian College was very common among leading professors of medicine in Padua. However, the majority of the members were practising physicians. The College mainly fulfilled two functions: awarding degrees and defending medical standards. Compared to its counterpart in Padua, the Sacro Collegio dei

⁴⁸"Olim in Patavino Gymnasio Medicinæ Theoricam Ordinar. Primo loco profitentis" See: Sanctorius 1625: title page.

⁴⁹Sanctorius's testament shows that he accumulated wealth during his lifetime. See: ASVe-g. For a transcription of the testament, see: Ettari and Procopio 1968: 139–46; for an English translation, see: Castiglioni 1931: 775–8. Castiglioni estimated that his fortune at the time of his death was 60–70,000 Venetian ducats (ibid.: 741).

Filosofi e Medici (Sacred College of Philosophers and Physicians), it awarded fewer degrees and was more concerned with regulating various aspects of medical practice. For example, it ensured that only doctors of arts and medicine could practice medicine in Venice (Palmer 1983: 8 ff., 13 f., 18).

Sanctorius was involved in the College's activities, but never presided over it, despite some of his biographers erroneously asserting that he did.⁵⁰ They may have confused it with the Collegio Veneto or with the Collegio dei Chirurghi di Venezia (College of Surgeons of Venice) with which the College of Physicians of Venice cooperated in arranging an annual public demonstration of anatomy in Venice. In 1613, the *Riformatori dello Studio* assumed responsibility for paying the *lector* and *incisor* at these anatomical events. The *lector* was responsible for a series of lectures on anatomy, whereas the *incisor* performed a separate series of anatomical demonstrations. Sanctorius was among those nominated for the position of *lector*, but he turned it down. The records of the College of Physicians show that Sanctorius participated in the institution's doctoral examinations (Fig. 2.2). In June 1626, he was named as *promotore* of Paulus Leonardus, who graduated in surgery.⁵¹ This is not the only indication of Sanctorius's expertise in this medical field, a topic I return to



Fig. 2.2 Drawing of a doctoral examination in the College of Physicians of Venice (date and author unknown) (BUP, MS 318, 25r). (By kind permission of Ministero della Cultura)

⁵⁰ E.g., Capparoni 1925–1928: 56, Castiglioni 1931: 740, Major 1938: 379, Sanctorius and Lebàn 1950: 37, Grmek 1952: 11, Eknayan 1999: 229 f.

⁵¹ The *promotores* assisted the candidate during the doctoral examination. Usually, the candidate was entitled to choose three or four *promotores* from amongst the members of the College, and to have another four assigned by lot (Palmer 1983: 37).

in a later chapter (Sect. 4.2.1). In 1629, Sanctorius, together with the *protomedico* (chief physician) of Venice, Giovanni Battista Fuoli (life dates unknown), was charged with obtaining an amendment to a senatorial decree, in order that the College might elect its secretary without the *Riformatori*'s interference (BNMVe: 29v, 33r, 34v; Ettari & Procopio 1968: 30; Palmer 1983: 46 f., 50).

Besides his activities in the College of Physicians of Venice, Sanctorius took up the tasks that he had imposed on himself upon leaving the University of Padua: to publish and edit his works. As mentioned earlier, he published his *Commentary on Avicenna* in 1625, followed quickly by a second edition only one year later. In 1629 he published his *Commentary on Hippocrates*, along with his *De remediorum inventione* (On the Invention of Remedies).⁵² Moreover, in 1630 he published revised editions of his books *Methodi vitandorum errorum* and the *Commentary on Galen*. However, one work announced several times by Sanctorius appears to have remained unpublished, the *Liber de instrumentis medicis* (Book on Medical Instruments). In his three commentaries he promised repeatedly to present in this book more written details of the construction and uses of his instruments, as well as more elaborate illustrations.⁵³ In 1624, Sanctorius requested the *privilegio*, a sort of copyright, not only for his *Commentary on Avicenna* but also for his “*De instrumentis medicis noviter inventis suo sanitate conservanda*” (On newly invented medical instruments to maintain one’s health) (ASVe-e).⁵⁴ A work had to be published within twelve months of the *privilegio* being granted; otherwise the *privilegio* expired (Witcombe 2004: 41). Hence, Sanctorius must have intended to publish both books soon. Interestingly, five years later, in the *Commentary on Hippocrates*, it sounds as if the book on instruments had actually been published. Sanctorius wrote: “we show the contemplation mentioned here in the *Commentaries on Avicenna* and in the *Book on Instruments*” (Sanctorius 1629a: 51).⁵⁵ If this really was the case, all trace of the book has been lost.

In 1638 Johan van Beverwijck (Beverovicus, 1594–1647), a student of Sanctorius, published the work *De calculo renum & vesicae* (On kidney and bladder stones), which contains a *consilium* (word of advice) from Sanctorius and Hieronymus Thebaldus (life dates unknown). It is part of a longer piece on lithotomy, the surgical removal of bladder stones. The *consilium* and Beverwijck’s statements show how experienced Sanctorius was in treating this affliction. As will be seen later, Sanctorius also designed surgical instruments, among them a special syringe to extract bladder stones (Sect. 4.2.1). The *consilium* also refers to his distinguished Venetian clientele, as he recounts the case of a Senator who suffered from a bladder stone. Furthermore, it hints at his friendship with Hieronymus

⁵²In the following, I will refer to this work as *De remediorum inventione*.

⁵³See: Sanctorius 1612b: 62, 136, 229, Sanctorius 1625: Ad lectorem, 12, 24, 78, 200, 303, 513, finis, Sanctorius 1629a: 51.

⁵⁴For more information on copyright in the Renaissance, and in Venice specifically, see: Witcombe 2004.

⁵⁵“... ostendimus in commentariis Avicennae, & in lib. de instrumentis huic contemplationi dicatis:” See: Sanctorius 1629a: 51.

Thebaldus, a fellow Venetian physician, with whom he composed the advice. The two men were listed among the illustrious surgeons of Venice by Francesco Bernardi, in his account of surgery (Bernardi 1797: 49 f.).

2.7 Sanctorius's Role in the Treatment of the Plague

Thebaldus and Sanctorius were involved in treating the Venetian plague of 1630–1631, fighting, however, on opposite sides. The medical health officers (*Provveditori e Sopraprovveditori alla Sanità*) consulted the most famous physicians of the Republic to decide, after an examination of the sick, whether or not the latter were afflicted by plague. The opinions were conflicting and no conclusions were arrived at. Further discussions were held and, in August 1630, the Senate tried to solve the issue by organizing a plenary meeting of the physicians. The reports of the sessions illustrate the controversy. A group of physicians, including Sanctorius, persistently contested the existence of the contagion in the city. They were faced by another, smaller group of physicians, amongst them Fuoli and Thebaldus, who tried in vain to persuade the government of the reality of the plague.⁵⁶ Fierce disputes arose between the two parties and Fuoli, who had recognised the disease as plague from the beginning, faced public hostility and even death threats. Meanwhile, the epidemic spread. It was only toward the end of the year that the high mortality rate left no more room for doubt (Ettari & Procopio 1968: 80–3; Preto 1984: 382 f.).

Why did Sanctorius fail to realize the seriousness of the situation? What made him doubt that the plague was ravaging Venice? These questions seem all the more pressing given that there was a precedent to the ill-judged response dating back fifty years. Already in 1576, the Paduan professors Girolamo Mercuriale and Girolamo Capodivacca (died 1589) had mistaken the Venetian plague for other diseases. Strikingly, but maybe not surprisingly, they both taught Sanctorius.⁵⁷ Thus, medical education may have played a part here. Furthermore, economic and political factors must be taken into account. Confirming that there was plague in the city would have had immense social and economic consequences. Trade as well as public and private commerce would have stagnated, and the government feared for the freedom of Venice. Thus, the ruling patriciate struggled to ensure that their measures would not impinge on foreign political interests, and laid the groundwork for economic and social recovery. The denial of the existence of plague in the city was most welcome to them. It was, of course, also what the people wanted to hear. The fact that Sanctorius's friend, Nicolò Contarini, was the doge, at this time, surely increased the burden of liability on the physician's shoulders (Palmer 1978: 238–79; Preto 1984: 380–87).

⁵⁶Two statements by Thebaldus, in which he insisted that the disease in Venice was plague, can be found in the following file: ASVe-a: f. 12r–13r, 31r–32r.

⁵⁷In his *Commentary on Hippocrates*, Sanctorius referred to Capodivacca as his teacher: “Quarta opinio fuit Hieronymi capivacei praeceptoris nostri,” See: Sanctorius 1629a: 95.

In addition to signing joint statements that denied the existence of a plague in Venice, Sanctorius also gave his personal opinion, as requested by the authorities. In his assessment, he confirmed what he had previously claimed: there was no plague in Venice. Without going into the details of the document, it is notable that Sanctorius proposed that the sick be separated from the healthy and confined to the *lazaretto*. He warned that “what is not now may well still come about.”⁵⁸ A sign of doubt? Or even fear? Either way, it was not enough to make him change his position. However, when reality proved him wrong, he fulfilled his duties and did not flee from the Black Death, as many of his colleagues did (ASVe-a: f. 47r–47v, 60r–61r; Ettari & Procopio 1968: 82 f.; Girardi 1830: 16; Dolfin 1843: 28).

2.8 Death and Legacy

A few years later, on February 25, 1636, Sanctorius died at his home in Venice.⁵⁹ In accordance with his wishes, he was buried in the Venetian Church *Santa Maria dei Servi*, where a bust was erected to his memory. His friend Paolo Sarpi, being a famous member of the Servite Order, had been buried in the same church. Sanctorius’s connection to the Order is further illustrated by his testament, in which he specified that a certain sum of money be left to the Servite Church in Koper, in order that it might annually commemorate his death. Moreover, he bequeathed a sum to the College of Physicians of Venice, ten ducats of which were to be given every year to a doctor at the College on condition that he publicly commemorate his benefactor (ASVe-g; Cigogna 1824: 50 f., 91 ff.).⁶⁰ Hence, Sanctorius made sure that his name would not be soon forgotten.

And it was not only his name that was kept alive, but also his remains: the final rest eluded them. In 1812, the Venetian Servite Church was destroyed and the bust of Sanctorius was thereupon taken to the Ateneo Veneto in Venice, where it stands

⁵⁸“... non bisogna però restare di usare le istesse diligenze, perché questo che non è potrebbe farsi: Ricordo pero alle E.V. Illme di far separare li sani, che hora stanno insieme con gl’Infetti, col’mandargli al Lazzaretto.” See: ASVe-a: f. 6v. This file contains the joint judgments as well as Sanctorius’s personal judgments regarding the plague of 1630–31. For transcriptions and paraphrases of the judgments, see: Dolfin 1843.

⁵⁹Many biographers indicated the wrong date of death, e.g., Castiglioni 1931: 740, Ettari and Procopio 1968: 30, Grmek 1975: 101. The exact date results from the work of Emmanuele Antonio Cigogna, who referred to the epitaph and the record of Sanctorius’s death. See: Cigogna 1824: 50 f., Cigogna 1827: 436 f. and Sanctorius and Ongaro 2001: 16, fn. 35.

⁶⁰The list of the Sanctorian Orators (*Oratori Santoriani*) continues until 1774, according to the remaining notes compiled from the College records by Giuseppe Bolis, see: BNMVe: f. 85v–87v. Most of the original records of the College were destroyed by fire in 1800. Hence, the public commemorations for Sanctorius took place for more than one hundred years, almost until the closure of the College in 1806 (Palmer 1983: 52 f.).

to this day.⁶¹ Francesco Aglietti (1757–1836), a Venetian physician and president of the Ateneo, collected Sanctorius's bones and kept them in a box in his library. Upon his death, the mummified body was found on top of the bookcase. It was then entrusted to Francesco Cortese (1802–1883), who had just become professor of anatomy in Padua. Except for the skull, he dispatched the bones to the cemetery, where they at last found their final resting place. He used the skull for his phrenological studies, until it was exhibited in the medical museum of the university. Later, it was displayed in the Hall of Medicine situated in the Palazzo Bo' of the University of Padua, and today it can be admired by visitors to Padua in the MUSME—the Museum of the History of Medicine (Fig. 2.3).⁶²

Of course, Sanctorius's legacy comprises more than bodily relics and commemorations. The preceding paragraphs sped through seventy-five years of a life filled with intellectual vitality and community. It turned out that Sanctorius combined a prosperous medical practice with a successful university career that came, however, to an unfortunate end. At some points in his biography, it seems that his priorities lay in the practice of medicine, accepting the displeasure that this provoked on the part of his students. Nevertheless, he wrote three extensive commentaries on

Fig. 2.3 Skull of Sanctorius Sanctorius (MUSME Padova). (By kind permission of Università degli Studi di Padova)



⁶¹ The Ateneo Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed. Arti is an institution for the promotion of the sciences, education, art, and culture. For more information, see: <https://www.ateneoveneto.org/it>

⁶² Cigogna 1824: 51, Ettari and Procopio 1968: 30, Palmer 1983: 54, Sanctorius and Ongaro 2001: 16, Zanatta, et al. 2016.

traditional texts used on university courses, two of which he published only after resigning his professorship. From childhood on, he belonged to Venetian high society and kept company with highly influential men. In the course of his life, he was connected to several important institutions, which attests that he was held in high esteem; and, at the same time, this enabled him to further expand his fame and social network. The weighing experiments, for which he was most celebrated and which later earned him the title of founder of a new medical science, accompanied his practice quite early. It seems that he developed his quantitative approach to medicine in the period between his graduation and his appointment as professor at the University of Padua.

However, the Sanctorius who came to light in the course of this chapter differs greatly from the common image of him. There was another side to him, besides the brilliant, successful physician. As first president of the Collegio Veneto, he put himself in direct conflict with the Catholic Church, certainly aware of the major political agenda behind this—to free the Venetian Republic from papal power. In addition, there were the recurrent quarrels and tensions with his students and, finally, his fatal position on the Venetian plague. It turns out that his career was not as smooth as it is usually portrayed to be. This brief biographical survey of Sanctorius's social, institutional, and professional contexts thus paves the way for a comprehensive review of Sanctorius and his work. In the next chapter, I continue this review by scrutinizing the intellectual context in which Sanctorius produced his scientific output.

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