



Title 425

**Dr Walter Michaelis**, the Author's father, telephoning no doubt with one of his patients, a typical scene in our home at 10 Landgrafen Strasse, Berlin, where he and my mother lived until her death in 1929.  
*Author's Collection.*

Once the inflation had ceased in 1923 and a stable currency had been re-established, the life of my parents was one of happiness and professional success. The number of my father's patients grew, not only in number, but also in standing, as his reputation increased. It was particularly the family of Franz von Mendelssohn, with his many children and grandchildren, who not only became patients, but also personal friends for him, and later also for me.

All this came to a sudden and tragic end with the death of my mother. During the winter of 1929, she had caught pneumonia, and in spite of all possible efforts by my father and his colleagues, her decline and death became irrevocable. The last picture I have in my mind is of my mother lying quietly in her bed, next to a large black rubber balloon. My father explained to me that the air in the balloon was to help her breathe. Many years later when I had studied chemistry, I found it particularly tragic that my mother had died in 1929, when only three years later, G. Domagk discovered sulphonamides. In 1935 they were introduced as *prontosil*, a drug that cured pneumonia.

My father was inconsolable, and only his work and his many friends were able to help him to continue his life. I could contribute very little. He saw at once that this loss also gravely affected me, aged 13 at the time. In those days school ended at lunch time, and as he was completely occupied with his patients, my father wisely decided that a young tutor should be found to spend the afternoons with me, to supervise my home work, to act as an older friend, to go with me to museums, and unforgettably, to take me up the new 100-meter high *Funkturm*, the radio transmitter of Berlin, still standing today.

We were very lucky to find Hans-Joachim Klare, a friend of a son of one my father's colleagues. Klare, soon to be named 'Klärchen' at home, was a graduate student at Berlin University, engaged in writing his dissertation on German classical philology, a discipline introduced by the Brothers Grimm in the middle of the 19th century and still very popular. He was the ideal person for the job. He needed the pocket money, coming from poor parents, and I needed the liberal and scholarly grounding for my life, which he could easily impart.

We became close friends, inspite of the 10 years, difference in our ages. I did not learn any classical philology, as my main interest was already science. When I left for England in October 1933, he gave me a small booklet in which he had written 80 aphorism and quotations. Let one suffice: *Zur Wissenschaft ist der Mensch nicht allein bestimmt. Der Mensch muss Mensch sein. Zur Menschheit ist er bestimmt. Universaltendenz ist dem eigentlichen Gelehrten unentbehrlich* by Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) 1772-1801. As 'interdisciplinarity', and as 'temper', it became a motto for my scientific life.