Mina Tobler and Max Weber: Passion Confined

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Abstract
The main biographical facts of Mina Tobler's life are presented. Her friendship and erotic relationship with Max Weber are outlined and their significance for the marriage of Max and Marianne Weber are discussed. Her influence on Weber's sociological writings are assessed.

Keywords: Mina Tobler, Max Weber, Marianne Weber, piano, eroticism, sociology of music.

Mina Tobler was one of the four women to whom Weber's main works were dedicated: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft to his mother Helene Weber, volume one of the Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie to his wife Marianne Weber, volume two to Mina Tobler, and volume three to Else Jaffé-Richthofen. Max Weber had decided on the first two dedications, and Marianne Weber and Else Jaffé-Richthofen arranged the last two dedications after Weber's death. They had taken Mina Tobler on board as the third person in their honorific community of adoration. The friendship that bound together Mina Tobler and Max Weber lies very much in the shadow of the relationship of Weber to Else Jaffé. It is only occasionally mentioned by Martin Green in his book The von Richthofen Sisters.1 Max Weber got to know Mina Tobler in 1909, and he remained in close contact with her until his death and for some of those years this was an erotic relationship.

Three people have left evidence of the relationship between Mina Tobler and Max Weber: Mina Tobler in letters to her mother in the years to 19172 (her letters to Max Weber have not come down to us), Marianne Weber in letters to her mother-in-law Helene Weber,3 and Max Weber

2. These are privately owned.
himself in the letters to Mina Tobler which have come down to us from the years 1915 to 1920. These three sources provide different perspectives and time frames, they are fragmentary, and do not relate to one another. The following sketch works with these sources, enlarging them with some measure of supposition.

Mina Tobler was born in Zurich on 24 June, 1880. She was the fourth and youngest child of a gymnasium school-teacher, Johann Ludwig Tobler, and his wife, Henriette, née Hattemer. Her parents had founded a private school that took boarders in Zurich in 1873 and they ran it until 1892. The school was then sold, but in 1912 their son-in-law Hans Ott, a mathematics and science teacher, was able to acquire it again. He ran the school with Mina Tobler’s sister and it was called the Ott-Tobler School. Mina Tobler grew up in Zurich in an educated middle-class environment and was trained as a pianist. In the winter of 1901–1902 and from April 1902 until March 1903 she studied piano at the Leipzig conservatoire with Professor Reisenauer and she played as an accompanist to the singer Professor Noë, with whom she formed a deep friendship, and later accompanied him in lieder recitals in Heidelberg and Karlsruhe. From March 1903 until May 1904 she returned to Zurich and after August 1904 she studied with Frau Kleeberg in Brussels. She concluded her studies with Professor Ansorge in Berlin in the winter of 1904–1905. Konrad Ansorge, a student of Liszt, was a well-known pianist and composer, who, among other things, set poems of Dehmel, George and Hölderlin to music. Mina Tobler revered him as a master and later she continued to take lessons with him.

At the age of 25 she made the self-assured decision to achieve her own independence, and in 1905 she moved to Heidelberg where she became a piano-teacher and acquired many pupils. She wanted to be able to stand on her own two feet economically and not to be provided for through marriage; she wanted to lead her own, free life. Mina Tobler was musically gifted, had many interests, was charming, and was an emancipated woman who wished for a husband who lived up to her ideals. She remained unmarried and lived in Heidelberg until 1967. She chose Heidelberg because her brother Ludwig Tobler (1877–1915) lived there, having become an assistant doctor in the paediatric clinic of the university in 1903. He habilitated in 1905, became a senior doctor in 1907, and in 1911 he was called to Breslau as a full professor and director of the university’s paediatric clinic. It was through her brother that


4. These will be published in the Letters section of the Max Weber Gesamtausgabe.
she was introduced to Heidelberg’s academic milieu. After his early death, his widow and two children moved back to Heidelberg in 1916. Mina Tobler became part of this family, which gave an additional framework to her life.

Mina Tobler quickly gained entrée to Heidelberg’s academic circles. She made contact with the university’s Director of Music, Philipp Wolfrum, who was founder of the Bach Society and the university choir and who prized her musical abilities. She was soon invited to perform in the family homes of the jurist Anschütz and the economist Goethein, and she was on friendly terms with the wife of the anatomist Hermann Braus, with Frau Goethein, and with some of the younger academics—Friedrich Gundolf, Emil Lask and Arthur Salz. They were all also part of Max Weber’s circle of friends. In 1907 she entered into a close friendship with Philipp Witkop, who habilitated in modern German literature in 1909 and was called to Freiburg in 1910. She ended the relationship in the autumn of 1910, when Witkop felt unable to commit himself to her.

Emil Lask introduced Mina Tobler to Max and Marianne Weber in June 1909 and she soon belonged to the circle of regular guests and close friends. Marianne Weber wrote in her biography ‘[Lask] introduces the musician Mina Tobler to the Weber household and she brings a new note into their lives as much through her artistic temperament and how she experiences the world as by her noble art, and during many years of friendship she enriches them as human beings as well as musically’.5 And, after an evening recital of lieders, Weber wrote to his wife: ‘Little Tobler accompanied brilliantly. In between she played Mozart and Chopin, in particular the last wonderfully. At once physically so graceful and resolutely strong, that it was a joy.’6 After the traumatic breaking-off of the friendship with Else Jaffé in the winter of 1910–11, Max Weber turned toward Mina Tobler. He bought a piano so that now Mina Tobler could also play at the Webers. Marianne Weber wrote to her mother-in-law on 10 August, 1911, that it was as though some part of her had entered the house along with the piano. In March, 1911, Weber asked Mina Tobler whether she would accept an invitation to accompany him and Marianne in the summer of the following year on a joint trip to Bayreuth and Munich to attend Wagner operas. Mina was enthusiastic. Marianne wrote to her mother-in-law on 19 January, 1912: ‘We are now more and more becoming little Tobler’s “Heimat”, she is such a dear, harmoniously benign, charming being—it’s just so terrible that there


isn’t a husband here for her—she is created for giving love and happiness and everyone likes her.’ And later: ‘Being together with her is a joy and she is also Max’s friend. He visits her regularly for musical lessons.’ The trip in August 1912 to Bayreuth (for Parsifal) and Munich (for Tristan and Isolde) was bliss for Mina Tobler and she was passionately enraptured with Max Weber. On their days in Munich, Marianne noted that Max ‘moved like a hunting dog and is always in good spirits’. The situation was not simple for Marianne, but she was forbearing and wrote to her mother-in-law on 19 August, 1912: ‘I am glad that Max has found in her a friend who again enlivens him, and, musically and artistically in general, she does have something special to offer him.’ At the end of 1912 Marianne Weber noted: ‘She has such a wonderful zest for living and generates her own raptures of the soul. With Max she appears to me to be in a calmer state now (who can know?) and that makes our being together an unconstrained pleasure once again.’

The relationship between Max Weber and Mina Tobler developed over the course of the year in 1911, its erotic character remaining at first latent, but strengthening after the time in Munich in 1912. Max Weber later reminisced in a letter from Vienna on 14 April, 1918: ‘On the journey here I thought a lot of that time (1912) in Munich and everything else since then—how strangely it happened and how beautiful it was—and hopefully it will be, when everything is different from today, the war is finished and I am once again there. I have to be grateful to destiny, however complicated it often was. But what of you? I’m really not sure of that. Anyway what help is it to think about these things—the gods willed it and us as well!’ He put this more exactly in the ‘Intermediate Reflection’ chapter in the Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie: ‘No genuine erotic relationship will think of itself as anything other than as a mysterious determination of one for the other—destiny in the highest meaning of the word, ordained and therefore (in a totally unethical sense) “legitimated”.’

In May 1911 Mina Tobler had moved into the attic floor of 17 Bismarckstraße. Max Weber visited her there frequently, mostly on Saturdays. In letters to Mina Tobler he recalled the hours of romantic dalliance with her using the metaphor of the ‘golden heaven’. The romance was characterized by a melancholy sense of being only temporary. At first this was a result of the external constraints and complications. But also within himself Weber remained ambivalent. The spontaneous force of
Mina Tobler’s love was not sufficient to displace Weber from his way of life. He spoke to her about ‘the value of life and the place which happiness should play in it’. Both were aware of the asymmetry in the relationship. Mina Tobler wrote to her mother at the beginning of July 1914: ‘One has simply to endure the external limits to taking possession and this is not always easy to bear. Better than belonging together outwardly but not being able to come together inwardly.’ When Weber in November 1915 sent Mina Tobler a present of a volume of the Insel edition of Goethe, he wrote a dedication: ‘Alas! why ye Gods is all, all eternal, our happiness alone fleeting’ from Goethe’s Pandora. In the separation letter of 15 March, 1919, he looked back on ‘this strong, pounding, magnificent pool of beauty and love, what you, incomparable child, are giving to me...something never before experienced—yearning and fulfilment both together...’; he remembered ‘a wonderful soul, strong, proud, and magnificent in which I was harboured and to which I surrendered myself’ and thought of ‘the responsibility, which I have taken on by allowing myself to accept my happiness from you as a gift—generous and extravagant’.

In his novel Der grüne Heinrich Gottfried Keller could have allowed Heinrich to say the same words to his lover, Judith, whose name Max Weber chose for Mina Tobler. On her 34th birthday he sent her a two volume edition of Der grüne Heinrich with the dedication ‘to Judith’. On each of the two title pages he wrote a line of music from Richard Wagner’s Die Meistersinger whose text refers to John the Baptist Day on 24th June and this was the day of Mina Tobler’s birthday. Keller characterized his Judith as a seductive, beautiful and self-assured woman who in her confident sensuality is superior to Heinrich. He also describes her as a sensitive woman, who accepts Heinrich’s vacillating between his earthly love of her and the ‘spiritual’ love that ties him to the youthful love of the now dead Anna. When Heinrich will not come to her, she renounces her love for him and leaves him. What caused Weber to call Mina Tobler ‘Judith’ and to connect her with Keller’s portrait of Judith? Was it the having and not-having of passion and renunciation, of yearning and resignation? A homage to her beauty and grace, yet also at the same time

10. I am indebted to Tilman Evers and Diemut Schnetz, the great-nephew and great-niece of Mina Tobler, for this information. Professor Stefan Prey (Berlin) was able to identify the music as part of Wagner’s Meistersinger.
11. Keller’s Der grüne Heinrich apparently also served as an analogy for the story of Paul Morel in D.H. Lawrence’s novel Sons and Lovers as Martin Green shows in The von Richthofen Sisters. He also mentions the allusion to the ‘grüner Heinrich’ in Max Weber’s using the name of Judith for Mina Tobler on pp. 136-138.
the message of the final renunciation? The first edition of the novel of 1854/55, which Weber gave to her in 1914 in the student edition by Cotta Verlag, ended without prospect for Judith and tragically for Heinrich. The second edition of 1880 has a conciliatory ending—Heinrich and Judith after a ten year separation are placed in a kinder proximity. In neither case is the love realized as a life-long bond. In November 1918 when Weber was composing an article for the Frankfurter Zeitung under the pressure of Germany’s defeat, he wrote to Mina from Frankfurt: ‘You must have the patience of a saint with your “grüner Heinrich” —the Kellerian has indeed granted that and it has certainly stayed with him.’ With the choice of the name Judith Max Weber placed his relationship to Mina Tobler under the sign of resignation. Later in a letter from June 1919 Max Weber spelt this out: ‘Separation was always in a certain sense inscribed on this love which over time consisted of two great halves—always of yearning and memories, of hope and knowledge of the existence of the other.’

There is indirect evidence of the ethical conflict for the year 1913 from the letters which relate to the affair between Emil Lask and Lina Radbruch. Lask and Radbruch were assistant professors of Heidelberg University, and the affair was followed by the divorce of the Radbruchs. Weber was not willing to condemn Lask morally, even though he was prone to rigorous ethical judgements. In a letter to Karl Jaspers from 21 May, 1913, he justified his leniency with a hypothetically formulated reference to himself: ‘I tell myself and indeed must tell myself: whether I personally would have always resisted, or always would resist, the passionate desire of a beautiful woman in all external and inward circumstances—since these things are so decisive—I can’t really say, except that: I would regard the opposite as a severe injustice and misfortune, and I hope (but do not know) that I would—if it nevertheless had happened—behave in several ways very differently from Lask.’ On 6 June, 1913, Weber wrote to Emil Lask: ‘Whether I, if unattached, could have always withstood the passionate longing of a beautiful and inwardly stimulating woman, that is something I would rather not examine too closely; I don’t think so, excepting that I—as in these circumstances is more prudent—would have immediately and definitively brought the relationship to an end.’ Weber rejected Lask’s supposition that from an adulterous relationship there follows ‘a moral “violation” that can never be healed’. ‘This applies only to completely weak people, what has happened has happened, and what matters is that we help all those involved

gradually to an understanding that allows them to come to terms with it as human beings—as life plays with us. This will surely occur and be achieved.’

Weber wrote these sentences while under the influence of his erotic relationship with Mina Tobler, which he had not immediately and definitely ended, as would have been ‘in these circumstances more prudent’.

Max and Marianne Weber called Mina the ‘Tobelkind’. Marianne wrote to her mother-in-law on 19 August, 1912: ‘She has a strange nature: in one way she is very mature, and in another still like an eighteen-year old despite her thirty-three years, so completely absorbed with herself and her destiny.’ Mina Tobler was sixteen years younger than Max Weber, she had courted him, he allowed himself to be loved by her. This overwhelming experience of love never achieved for him an existential commitment. Against it stood the deep obligation he owed to Marianne Weber, but also the priority which he had given to the unfolding of his ideas and their realization in his work. From 1912 onwards he worked with the greatest possible concentration on his contribution *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* for the *Grundriß für Sozialökonomik*. The encounter with Mina Tobler did not become for Weber part of his destiny. Mina Tobler was forced to carry the burden of the asymmetry in the relationship, and for her Max Weber became her destiny. For her, he was ‘the most important man in Heidelberg! Simply the best!’ She had written that to her mother on 25 February, 1911. On 8 June, 1913, she reported that Friedrich Gundolf said to her that Stefan George and Max Weber were the greatest creative minds (‘*Potenzen*’) of whom he knew today and Max Weber was the greatest type of Christian that he knew, just like the great Russians Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. She added: ‘With one such type must I, a heathen creature, become involved.’ She admired him limitlessly. At the start of January 1914 the two met in Berlin. ‘Then we travelled back together and all the time I was the little girl in the fairy-story where the stars fall into her pinny’ (Letter, 11 January, 1914). On 12 February, 1914, she wrote: ‘With every week he is finding his way in a world with which he was not familiar, and it is so moving to see him now master it with the whole strength and depth of his being.’ In January 1915 she noted: ‘Sometimes it frightens me terribly that at this moment he has to remain on the side-lines when German diplomacy stands helpless before its greatest challenges. Sometimes one thinks one must tear the stars from the heavens in order to find a way so that this life is finally used according to its worth. His wife also feels the same way.’

13. MWG II/8, p. 247.

When Max Weber travelled to Ascona early in spring 1913 and 1914, coming in contact with Frieda Gross and getting involved on her side in the legal dispute with her father-in-law over the guardianship of her son, Mina Tobler did not remain untouched by jealousy. She feared the seduction arts of Frieda Gross. Max Weber was indeed fascinated, but he maintained his distance from ‘this world full of enchantresses, charm, malice, and the lust for happiness’ that he encountered in Ascona. He wrote to Marianne Weber on 9 April, 1914, after an outing with Mina Tobler to the Ufenau island on Lake Zurich: ‘I must say: the contrast between this beautiful and in a certain sense “human” world based on sensations lacking any depth and yesterday’s trip to the Ufenau with the far less prodigal but in her reserved and gently effusive way more “noble” child—it was a sort of oasis of purity, one cannot describe it differently.’14 For Weber, Mina Tobler did not belong to the ‘erotic women’, ‘for whom in truth only the erotic man is valued’.15 He was no ‘erotic man’ and felt himself inferior to ‘erotic women’. In contrast, in the relationship with Mina Tobler he gained, as a man, security and self-confidence. Her love was gentle, full of aesthetic beauty and without a ‘lust for happiness’.

In the realm of the erotic ‘steeped in its own value and beyond the everyday’ Max Weber espied ‘the strongest irrational force of personal life’.16 In the ‘Intermediate Reflection on the Economic Ethics of the World Religions’, which he outlined before the outbreak of war in 1914, he found some impressive words for the special position of the erotic. He placed it in tension with ‘rational vocational asceticism’, but above all in opposition to the otherworldly ethic of salvation religions. He had personally experienced the conflict between the ‘value-spheres’ that he presented. There could be no reconciliation between them, only a separation of the erotic from the other value-spheres insofar and as long as this was possible. Though ‘the lover knows himself to be placed at the core of what is truly alive—always inaccessible to rational endeavours—and to have completely escaped the cold skeletal hand of the rational orders as well as the dullness of the everyday’, there nevertheless exists in the erotic relationship ‘a relationship of conflict not just only, nor even predominantly, of jealousy and exclusive possessiveness but, far more than this, of the innermost rape of the less brutal partner’s soul that is never even noticed by those involved themselves, as a refined enjoyment of oneself in the other through the deception of the most human surren-

14. MWG II/8, p. 605.
This radical dramatization of the erotic and its interlinked conflict of values was produced from the contrasting formation of categories of Weber’s value analysis and not from the rationalization of Weber’s own experiences. But one can speculate that it also reflected Weber’s own problematic relationship with Mina Tobler. He knew that he owed a debt to her.

During the war years the frequency and intensity of meetings decreased. After his demanding military service in the administration of army hospitals over 1914–15 he spent long periods away from Heidelberg in Berlin, Vienna, and Frankfurt. Mina Tobler was badly affected by the death of her brother in 1915 and she was often in Switzerland. Political questions moved to the centre of Weber’s interests and he wanted to influence the course of events. In his letter to Mina Tobler of 15 March, 1919, in which he told her about his accepting an offer of a chair in Munich, and so the ending of their relationship, he confessed that over the last two and a half years—i.e. since the end of 1916—he had felt the continuous pressure of having to bring the relationship to an end. Again and again he had put this off and now the move to Munich provided the occasion for the break. He kept quiet about the renewed relationship with Else Jaffé.

Mina Tobler inspired Max Weber in the years 1911 to 1914, a time of the greatest mental concentration and the quite extraordinary productivity of the texts of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* and on the ‘comparative sociology of religion’. In the middle of 1912 Weber ceased to complain of psycho-physical breakdowns. He no longer regarded himself as a sick man, as he had following his total breakdown in 1898–99; instead he was getting better. Marianne Weber noted in December, 1911: ‘Max is much more cheerful and works as much as he can.’ His ability to work was phenomenal and he found himself in a ‘manic’ phase of his tendency to depression in his emotional life.

Max Weber was occupied with the ‘sociology of music’ during the period of his friendship with Mina Tobler. At the first conference of the German Sociological Society in October 1910, Weber had already formulated the problem in his contribution to the discussion of Werner Sombart’s lecture on technology and culture: ‘To what extent formal aesthetic values in the artistic field have originated from well-defined technological situations. And a further step would be to separate the purely technological side from the socio-economic side. The formula-

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tion and composition of the posthumous manuscript on the ‘rational and sociological foundations of music’ mainly took place in the years 1911 and 1912. In a letter to her mother-in-law on 12 May, 1912, Marianne Weber reported: ‘On the previous Sunday we had the Eranos here at home—you know, that academic circle of old gentlemen. Max spoke for two and a half hours in full torrent about the most difficult matters in musical theory and their relation to economic and sociological matters. The people were almost drowned by how much he had to say and I finally had to cut in and save the audience and the waiting asparagus.’ At this point in time Weber had just about defined his ideas in their essentials. At the start of August 1912 he informed his sister Lily Schäfer: ‘I will write something about the history of music. That is, on the specific social conditions which explain that only we have harmonic music, although other cultures possess a much finer ear for music and a much more intensive musical culture. It’s remarkable! It’s the achievement of the monasteries, as will be shown.’\(^1\)

But in August 1913 he wrote to Karl Löwenstein: ‘I won’t speak about the “sociology of music”, that is all put aside’, put aside for the texts of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft.*\(^2\)

It is reasonable to say that Weber’s increased interest in music was brought about through the connection to Mina Tobler, although his interest does in fact date back earlier. He frequently went to opera and concert performances in the years 1911 to 1914, partly in her company. She would play piano excerpts to prepare Weber for Wagner’s operas, which they attended in Bayreuth and Munich in 1912. She was certainly a very knowledgeable conversational partner full of enthusiasm for the subject. As a trained pianist whose favourite composers were Brahms and Beethoven, and Schubert and Chopin, whom she often performed for Weber, she was able to explain the theory of harmony and compositional structures at the keyboard. Also while at university she studied with Philipp Wolfrum and — at least in the winter semester of 1905-6 — she enrolled for counterpoint. Looking back, Max Weber wrote to Mina Tobler from Munich in September 1919 that he has used the old notes for a colloquium on the ‘sociology of music’, and he added, ‘I almost could not resist saying that the work of that time has been done “under the guidance of a friend” — but I thought this too indiscreet’. Weber certainly discussed questions of musical theory with Mina Tobler but it is probable that the ‘rational’ and ‘sociological’ foundations of musical development remained foreign to her. This assumption is supported by her somewhat naïve reaction to *The Protes-

\(^{1}\) MWG II/7, pp. 638-39.
\(^{2}\) MWG II/8, p. 302.
tant Ethic and the ‘Spirit’ of Capitalism, which Max Weber gave her to read in the autumn of 1912. She wrote to her mother on 6 October, 1912: ‘Isn’t that splendid, such an historical chain of arguments in which each part is remorselessly pieced together without any gaps, where, as in this case, “the writer” makes himself totally invisible but nevertheless everything that is there is involuntarily animated by the heartbeat of a grand personality. He said I would find it boring, and I have read it as if it were a good novel.’ Mina Tobler could not provide Weber with any intellectual resonance, or act as a critic; she reacted spontaneously and emotionally.

Mina Tobler was an erotic and sensuous woman, and she fed Weber's longing for spontaneous tenderness. This experience brought Weber to recognize in the erotic an ‘extra-ethical, autonomous value-sphere’ of ‘beauty’. From the year 1913 there originated several passages in the same tone in different writings. He considered the significance of the erotic in the ‘Intermediate Reflection’, in the essay ‘The meaning of “value freedom” in the sociological and economic sciences’, in the ‘Sociology of Religion’ in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Weber attributed to the erotic relationship an ‘immanent dignity’ that entered into a permanent conflict with the other value-spheres. Here, as in almost all the important stances to the world of actual human beings, the value-spheres intertwine and intersect. In the face of these contradictions the individual had to choose in a ‘chain of ultimate decisions through which the soul, as with Plato, has to determine its own destiny – that is, the meaning of its actions and being’. In deciding for an erotic relationship with Mina Tobler Weber had made an important choice, but one that did not thereby alter his ‘destiny’. He remained caught in his own ambivalences, also in his erotic life.

Marianne Weber wrote perceptively to Helene Weber on 19 August, 1912, after the enthusiasm of the days in Munich: ‘Much remains unresolved in Mina and I don’t know how it should turn out. She is so spirited emotionally—much like Else Jaffé but not so experienced and articulate as her.’ The latter, though, had re-entered Weber’s life at the end of 1917. Mina Tobler, whom in 1917 Weber addressed as ‘beloved Judith’, renounced her love, just as did the Judith in Gottfried Keller’s novel *Der grüne Heinrich*.

Marianne Weber had an appreciation for Mina Tobler. Weber had found in her, as she wrote, ‘another friend who refreshes him’ and she

had nothing against this. In 1909 she was soon forced into the painful recognition that Max Weber’s erotic feelings were not directed towards her. That very year, during a holiday together with Else and Edgar Jaffé in Grignano on the Adriatic, it had suddenly become clear to her: ‘He loves her! He loves her not only as a friend but as something more.’ And on 14 January 1911 she noted in her private notes, ‘What was the most painful thing in Grignano? I had believed that it was me who had brought to life all the strength of feeling that was given to him, making him so energetic, and I was mistaken.’ She was herself sure of the ‘intellectual bond’ she had with him. This could not be endangered by Mina Tobler. She also recognized the sexual problems of her husband and perceived that the erotic posed no threat to their marriage. Though Marianne had not herself experienced the force of sensuality she had recognized it as she became involved in her revered friend Else Jaffé’s way of life; but Marianne always remained convinced of the ethical force and dignity of marriage. In the intensive discussions that had been going on since 1907 between Marianne and Max Weber over the conduct and personality of Else Jaffé both had changed their evaluation of the erotic.\(^\text{22}\) In this respect these discussions formed the cognitive basis whereby Max Weber was able to conduct a relationship with Mina Tobler and Marianne Weber was able to accept it. Marianne Weber had courted Max Weber before their marriage, and her courtship lasted until his death. In 1913 she wrote to him on his birthday: ‘How beautiful it is to be bound to you not by “obligation” – but through the force of your being, that shows one the way just as does the dear warm sun its planets.’ Weber answered defensively: ‘I hope it will be always possible for me at least not to disavow (these poems) and to preserve the possibility “to poeticize” your soul ever anew…maintain your love for me… Then not only in the coming year but in the many years that are allotted to us we will always be happy and going forwards together.’\(^\text{23}\) Marianne Weber had entered into marriage with a limitless admiration for Max Weber that Max had continually fended off. Even in his engagement letter where he addressed her as my ‘high-minded comrade’, he demanded of her: ‘We must not tolerate any fanciful surrender to unclear and mystical moods in our souls.’ And further, ‘I say to you: I shall take the course that I must and which you now know – you will take it with me. Where it will lead, how


\(^{23}\) Both quotes are from the letter 21 April, 1913, of Max Weber to Marianne Weber in MWG II/8, pp. 193-95.
far it is, whether it will lead us together on this earth, I do not know.’

A deep-seated asymmetry characterized the ties between Max and Marianne Weber and this was not magnified by the relationship of Max Weber to Mina Tobler.

The death of Max Weber on 14 June, 1920, in Munich, shattered Marianne Weber and Else Jaffé, who had both been present at his death-bed. Mina Tobler was also very affected. Marianne Weber had respected the friendship of Max Weber to both, she was and remained on close terms with Else, and she also continued a long-lasting friendship with Mina. The latter looked after Alfred Weber in Heidelberg during 1920–21 after Alfred had suffered a psycho-physical breakdown. It was in her apartment that Alfred revived the tradition of Sunday academic gatherings. Marianne Weber moved back to Heidelberg in 1921 and in 1922 moved into the trusted house at 17, Ziegelhäuser Landstraße. In 1925 Else Jaffé also returned to Heidelberg. All were again reunited, except that Max was no longer there.

After Marianne had died in 1954 and Alfred in 1958, Mina and Else remained the last witnesses to the closest relationships of Max Weber’s life. They resided finally in the same home and recalled the ‘star’ of their lives, through whose brilliance they had found their own ‘destiny’. Mina Tobler gave Else Jaffé the letters to read which Max Weber had written to her, and the latter handed them over to Eduard Baumgarten, so that they have come down to us. In the announcement of Mina Tobler’s death, who died on 5 January, 1967, after the list of relatives was the name Dr Else Jaffé-von Richthofen, standing in one could surmise for Max Weber himself.

Mina Tobler, as the obituary noted, ‘guided several generations along the often difficult path of musical proficiency… After the Second World War her piano teaching was transferred to the aspiring organists of the Institute for Church Music… Her unusual personality — generous and to the point, unbiased, warm-hearted and wholly unsentimental, stimulating and full of a superior humour — exerted its powerful attraction on old and young to the last.’

25. Martin Green (The von Richthofen Sisters, p. 225 n. 6) reports a letter of Else Jaffé to her sister Frieda after the death of Marianne Weber in 1954 where she writes: ‘It has become ever more clear to me that were Marianne Weber to die the constellation in which my star also stands would sink below the horizon.’ The idea of Max Weber as the ‘star’ of her life is something that also bound Else Jaffé to Mina Tobler.