

SCHOLARLY ARTICLE

The Interplay of Philosophy and Psychology in the Works of Antonio Tabucchi: A Multidimensional Exploration of the Human Condition

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Abstract

Antonio Tabucchi, a renowned Italian writer, skillfully blends philosophy and psychology to explore the complexities of the human condition. His works, including *Sostiene Pereira* and *Notturmo Indiano*, address themes such as identity, memory, time, morality, and the unconscious. Drawing from existentialists like Sartre and Heidegger, Tabucchi portrays time as subjective and identity as fluid, shaped by memory and relationships. Influenced by Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms, Tabucchi's characters often navigate fragmented selves and societal expectations, embodying the tension between authenticity and external pressures. Dreams and nostalgia feature prominently, reflecting unresolved emotions and the bittersweet nature of longing for the past. Tabucchi's narratives examine moral dilemmas and ethical awakenings, emphasizing vulnerability, resilience, and the transformative power of relationships. By integrating philosophical depth and psychological nuance, his works transcend traditional boundaries, inviting readers to reflect on existential questions and offering a profound lens into the richness of human life.

Keywords: identity, memory, unconscious, existentialism, fragmented selves, nostalgia

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Introduction

Antonio Tabucchi is widely recognized as one of Italy's most influential contemporary writers, known for his ability to craft stories that resonate on both emotional and intellectual levels. His works go beyond simple narratives, blending philosophical depth and psychological insight to explore the complexities of human life. At the heart of Tabucchi's writing are themes like identity, memory, time, morality, and the unconscious, which he examines through characters caught in moments of existential reflection and personal discovery.

This paper takes a closer look at how Tabucchi skillfully combines philosophy and psychology in his storytelling. By weaving these disciplines into his narratives, he opens a window into the struggles and questions that define the human experience. Through his unique approach, Tabucchi doesn't just tell stories; he prompts readers to think deeply about life, choices, and the nature of selfhood.

Antonio Tabucchi: A Literary Bridge Between Italy and Portugal

Antonio Tabucchi (Pisa, September 24, 1943 – Lisbon, March 25, 2012) was a prominent Italian writer, literary critic, translator, and professor. He specialized in Portuguese language and literature, becoming a leading expert on Fernando Pessoa, the Portuguese poet who deeply influenced his career. Tabucchi's fascination with Pessoa began during his university years when he discovered *Tabacaria*, a work by Pessoa's heteronym Álvaro de Campos. This

encounter led Tabucchi to learn Portuguese, aided by his Portuguese wife, Maria José de Lancastre. Together, they translated Pessoa's works into Italian and collaborated on essays and a theatrical play dedicated to the poet. Tabucchi's writings have been translated into about 20 languages, earning him numerous accolades, including the French Médicis étranger prize for *Notturmo indiano* and Italy's Campiello and Viareggio prizes for *Sostiene Pereira* (Antonio Tabucchi, n.d.).

Born in Pisa and raised in the nearby village of Vecchiano by his maternal grandparents, Tabucchi developed an early love for literature through his uncle's library. During his studies at the University of Pisa, he traveled extensively across Europe. On a trip to Paris, he found *Tabacaria* on a bookstall, which ignited his lifelong passion for Pessoa and Portuguese culture. After graduating in 1969 with a thesis on Portuguese surrealism, Tabucchi pursued further specialization at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. He began teaching Portuguese literature at the University of Bologna in 1973, the same year he wrote his first novel, *Piazza d'Italia*. This work presented a historical narrative from the perspective of a family of anarchists, reflecting his interest in exploring the stories of marginalized groups and drawing comparisons to Italian literary figures such as Verga and Fenoglio.

Tabucchi's novels and short stories often grapple with themes of identity, memory, existential quests, and ethical dilemmas. *Notturmo indiano*, published in 1984, tells the story of a man searching for a missing friend in India, a metaphorical journey of self-discovery. The novel earned the Prix Médicis étranger and was adapted into a 1989 film directed by Alain Corneau. His most celebrated work, *Sostiene Pereira* (1994), portrays the moral awakening of a journalist living under Portugal's Salazar regime. This novel became a symbol of resistance to political oppression and was adapted into a film starring Marcello Mastroianni. Other significant works include *Il gioco del rovescio* (1981), *Requiem* (1992), and *Si sta facendo*

sempre più tardi (2001). Tabucchi's narratives frequently explore memory and trauma, as well as fragmented identities influenced by Pessoa's heteronyms and existentialist philosophy.

Widely recognized across Europe, Tabucchi received numerous honors, including the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres from France and the Order of Infante Dom Henrique from Portugal. He served as the director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Lisbon and regularly contributed to publications such as *Corriere della Sera* and *El País*. In addition to his literary work, Tabucchi was a vocal critic of political injustices, particularly in Italy under the Berlusconi government¹. He engaged in civic activism and often spoke out on issues of democracy and freedom.

Despite battling cancer in his later years, Tabucchi continued to write and remained deeply engaged with literary and cultural discourse. He passed away in Lisbon in 2012, and, as per his wishes, his ashes were interred in the city's Cemitério dos Prazeres. His widow later donated his archive to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Posthumously, his legacy was further honored with the publication of his complete works in *Meridiani*, including an unpublished novel, *Lettere a capitano Nemo* (Antonio Tabucchi, n.d.). Antonio Tabucchi remains a towering figure in literature, renowned for his ability to bridge Italian and Portuguese cultures and for his profound explorations of the human condition.

His works uniquely intertwine philosophy and psychology, offering readers a rich and introspective lens into themes such as identity, memory, time, morality, and the unconscious. By seamlessly blending these interdisciplinary approaches, Tabucchi's narratives transcend traditional literary boundaries, inviting an inquiry into the depths of the human condition.

¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/antonio-tabucchi-novelist-who-became-a-fierce-critic-of-berlusconi>

Antonio Tabucchi's Main Works

Antonio Tabucchi's literary achievements span a range of novels and short stories that reflect his mastery of themes such as identity, memory, and existential struggle, often infused with philosophical and psychological depth.

Notturmo indiano (1984)

This novel, written in a first-person narrative, follows the introspective journey of a protagonist traveling through India in search of his missing friend, Xavier. The story begins with an air of mystery and unfolds through a series of encounters with a diverse cast of characters, each of whom offers the protagonist a glimpse into different facets of life, culture, and himself. As he moves from bustling cities like Bombay and Madras to quieter locales such as Goa, the journey becomes increasingly symbolic, blending external landscapes with the protagonist's inner world.

The narrative is driven by episodic encounters that are rich with symbolism and metaphor. In Bombay, the protagonist meets a Jain devotee awaiting a train, a doctor at a hospital, and a prostitute named Vimala Sar, each interaction hinting at deeper truths about mortality, desire, and faith. In Madras, he engages with a theosophist and an enigmatic woman named Margaret, while his experiences on the road to Mangalore bring him face-to-face with unsettling figures, including a monstrous Arhant and his brother. Goa serves as the setting for some of the novel's most surreal and introspective moments, where the protagonist encounters a ghostly figure of the viceroy of India and an old priest, Father Pimentel, who seems to embody the weight of colonial history and spiritual reflection.

These interactions are not merely stops along a physical journey but reflections of the protagonist's own fragmented psyche. As he delves deeper into his search, it becomes clear that his quest for Xavier is, in essence, a metaphor for self-discovery. The act of searching itself becomes more important than the object of the search, as the protagonist grapples with questions of identity, memory, and the passage of time. Tabucchi uses this narrative structure to explore the fluidity of identity, suggesting that the self is shaped as much by encounters and experiences as by personal reflection.

The novel's atmosphere is imbued with a dreamlike quality, heightened by Tabucchi's evocative descriptions of India's vibrant and diverse settings. India is not merely a backdrop but a living, breathing presence in the story, offering a tapestry of contrasts—chaos and serenity, modernity and tradition, the material and the spiritual. This duality mirrors the protagonist's internal journey, as he oscillates between certainty and doubt, connection and isolation.

Themes of memory and loss permeate the novel, with the protagonist frequently reflecting on moments from his past that parallel his current experiences. The people he meets often serve as mirrors, reflecting aspects of his own fears, hopes, and unresolved emotions. This interplay between memory and the present gives the narrative a cyclical quality, suggesting that the journey forward is as much about revisiting the past as it is about seeking the future.

Notturmo indiano is a meditation on the human condition, exploring the universal desire for connection and understanding in a world that often feels fragmented and inscrutable. Its episodic structure and philosophical undertones invite readers to consider their own journeys and the relationships that shape them. Tabucchi's ability to weave introspection with external adventure creates a narrative that is both deeply personal and universally resonant.

The novel's critical acclaim was cemented when it won the prestigious *Prix Médicis étranger* in 1987, a testament to its powerful storytelling and philosophical depth. In 1989, it was adapted into a film by Alain Corneau, further broadening its reach and highlighting its cinematic quality. Through its exploration of memory, identity, and the elusive nature of truth, *Notturmo indiano* remains one of Tabucchi's most profound and enduring works.

Piccoli equivoci senza importanza (1985)

Antonio Tabucchi's collection of eleven short stories, *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza* (*Little Misunderstandings of No Importance*), explores the complexities and fragility of human existence. The stories focus on how seemingly trivial misunderstandings and coincidences can profoundly influence the course of people's lives, often leading to unexpected and far-reaching outcomes. With a mix of introspection and irony, Tabucchi examines the interplay of fate, chance, and human intention, portraying life as a series of interconnected moments shaped as much by accident as by design.

In the titular story, the protagonist Tonino attends a courtroom trial involving his former university friends Federico, Leo, and Maddalena. The trial serves as a backdrop for Tonino's memories, shifting between the present and his student days, when the four friends shared their ideals, dreams, and youthful passions. Federico, now a judge presiding over the case, represents a life directed by ambition and convention, while Leo, the accused, symbolizes rebellion and the heavy cost of ideological commitment. Maddalena, though largely absent from the trial, lives on in Tonino's recollections as a figure of unspoken longing and missed opportunities.

As Tonino reflects on the lives of his friends, the story emphasizes how their paths were shaped by small, often unnoticed moments. Federico's path into law, Leo's descent into political extremism, and even Tonino's unfulfilled love for Maddalena all seem to stem from misunderstandings or decisions made almost by chance. For instance, Tonino recalls how he

assumed Maddalena was interested in Federico or Leo, a belief that prevented him from ever confessing his feelings. This seemingly minor misjudgment becomes emblematic of the larger misunderstandings that define their lives. Through such reflections, the story suggests that life's outcomes often hinge on fleeting moments of miscommunication and the unintended consequences of actions.

Tabucchi captures these themes with a blend of humor, melancholy, and quiet introspection, highlighting the ways in which the past continuously shapes the present. The story invites readers to consider how small events and misunderstandings ripple through time, leaving lasting effects on relationships and personal trajectories. While Federico and Leo's dramatic transformations offer more obvious examples, Tonino's quiet regret and longing serve as a poignant reminder of the subtle ways chance influences lives.

The other stories in the collection explore similar themes of miscommunication, irony, and the fragility of human relationships. In *Rebus*, a character grapples with the mysteries of life, presented as a puzzle whose pieces never fully align. In *Anywhere...*, inspired by Baudelaire, a character's yearning to escape the constraints of existence reflects the universal struggle between desire and reality. These narratives, like the titular story, suggest that while people attempt to control their fates, their lives are often steered by forces beyond their understanding or control.

Tabucchi's writing transforms these "small misunderstandings" into profound reflections on human existence. He demonstrates how moments that seem insignificant can shape destinies, revealing the delicate balance between personal choices and external influences. Through *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza*, Tabucchi offers a nuanced view of the human condition, illustrating how our lives are intricately tied to chance, missteps, and the echoes of our interactions with others.

Requiem (1992)

Written in Portuguese, *Requiem* takes readers on an oneiric journey through Lisbon. The protagonist, presumably a reflection of Tabucchi himself, meets a series of evocative characters, including the ghost of Fernando Pessoa, who serves as a literary and spiritual guide. The novel explores time as a subjective experience and memory as a tool for reconciliation with the past. This dreamlike narrative blends fantastical and real elements, embodying Tabucchi's ability to merge the metaphysical with everyday life (Tabucchi *Requiem*).

Sostiene Pereira (1994)

Tabucchi's most celebrated novel, *Sostiene Pereira*, is set in Lisbon during the oppressive Salazar dictatorship of the late 1930s. At its center is Dr. Pereira, a middle-aged, widowed journalist who edits the cultural section of a small Lisbon newspaper, *Lisboa*. Pereira leads a quiet, routine-bound life, dominated by his memories of his deceased wife and his love for French literature, particularly the works of Honoré de Balzac. Apolitical and solitary, Pereira seems content to exist on the periphery of the political tensions engulfing Portugal, avoiding any engagement with the dictatorship or the resistance.

Pereira's complacency begins to shift when he encounters Francesco Monteiro Rossi, a young, idealistic writer, and his politically active girlfriend, Marta. He hires Monteiro Rossi to write obituaries for his cultural section, ostensibly as pre-prepared obituaries of prominent figures. However, Rossi's writings—passionate and subversive—reflect his disapproval of totalitarian regimes and reveal his commitment to the anti-Salazar resistance. Pereira initially avoids publishing Rossi's writings, wary of the potential consequences under the regime's strict censorship. Yet his growing admiration for the young man's courage and ideals begins to challenge his own apathy.

This transformation is further influenced by Pereira's conversations with Dr. Cardoso, a physician he meets while seeking treatment for his health issues. Cardoso introduces Pereira to the "theory of the confederation of souls," suggesting that individuals are not governed by a single, immutable identity but by a confederation of different "selves," which may shift dominance over time. This philosophical framework resonates with Pereira's internal struggle, as he starts to recognize the contradictions between his passive, insulated existence and the moral imperative to act against injustice.

As Pereira becomes more aware of the regime's brutality and the plight of its opponents, his latent moral conscience begins to surface. This shift reaches its climax when Monteiro Rossi, now deeply involved in anti-fascist activities, seeks refuge in Pereira's apartment. Rossi is eventually murdered by the regime's agents, an event that becomes a turning point for Pereira. Motivated by a sense of moral responsibility and outrage, Pereira uses his position as a journalist to craft and publish an audaciously subversive article that condemns the regime and pays tribute to Rossi. This act of defiance, carried out with calculated cunning to bypass censorship, marks Pereira's transition from passive observer to active dissenter.

Tabucchi himself described *Sostiene Pereira* as a "reverse coming-of-age story," where the protagonist undergoes a profound moral and political awakening later in life. The novel explores how an initial aesthetic distaste for authoritarianism—manifested in Pereira's aversion to the pomp and pageantry of the regime—can evolve into a deeply ethical resistance. Pereira's journey is not heroic in the traditional sense but instead reflects the quiet courage of an ordinary man compelled to act by an extraordinary sense of justice and humanity.

The novel's profound themes, subtle narrative style, and rich characterization earned it widespread acclaim, winning the prestigious Campiello and Viareggio literary prizes. *Sostiene Pereira* was later adapted into a 1995 film directed by Roberto Faenza, starring Marcello Mastroianni in the titular role. The film, much like the novel, resonated with audiences as a

poignant reminder of the importance of individual conscience and resistance in the face of political oppression. To this day, *Sostiene Pereira* remains a powerful testament to Tabucchi's ability to blend philosophical inquiry with literary artistry, offering a nuanced exploration of morality, courage, and the transformative power of human agency.

The Game of Reversals (Il gioco del rovescio)

Antonio Tabucchi's short story *The Game of Reversals* opens with the narrator contemplating Diego Velázquez's enigmatic painting *Las Meninas at the Museo del Prado*. This setting serves as a thematic parallel to the story's central motif: the elusive and multi-layered nature of truth. The narrator recalls the words of his late friend Maria do Carmo, who remarked that "the key to the painting lies in the figure in the background; it's a game of reversals" (Tabucchi *Il gioco del rovescio* 11). Shortly afterward, the narrator learns of Maria do Carmo's death through a curt phone call from her husband, Nuno Meneses de Sequeira, and sets off on an overnight train to attend her funeral in Lisbon.

During the journey, the narrator reflects on his close relationship with Maria do Carmo, particularly their shared passion for Fernando Pessoa and the literary landmarks of Lisbon. However, their bond extends beyond literary camaraderie, as Maria do Carmo secretly involves the narrator in the clandestine support of dissidents opposing Salazar's regime. Upon arriving in Lisbon, the narrator confronts Nuno, who challenges his understanding of Maria do Carmo, revealing that she may have been a spy for the regime, playing a "game of reversals" to manipulate those around her.

Nuno hands the narrator a cryptic note from Maria do Carmo containing the word SEVER. Back at his hotel, the narrator deciphers the word's reversal into REVÉS, meaning "reversal" in Spanish and "dreams" in French, further deepening the story's enigmatic layers. In a dreamlike conclusion, the narrator envisions Maria do Carmo in the background of Las

Meninas, embodying the figure she once claimed held the painting's secret. His attempt to uncover her true nature only leads him deeper into ambiguity, as he realizes the truth remains inaccessible, locked within the intricate weave of life's reversals.

Themes and Narrative Techniques

Across these works, Tabucchi employs a narrative style that blends existential reflection with symbolic encounters. The recurring motif of memory serves as both a bridge to the past and a lens to understand the present. His use of fluid timelines and ambiguous realities invites readers to grapple with the uncertainties of identity and existence. The philosophical underpinnings, particularly those of existentialism and phenomenology, enrich his exploration of human vulnerability and resilience.

Philosophical Foundations in Tabucchi's Works

Antonio Tabucchi's works exhibit a profound connection to existentialist philosophy, with readers often identifying parallels with the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Martin Heidegger. Central to his narratives are themes of individual freedom, ethical responsibility, and the quest for authenticity in a turbulent world. In *Sostiene Pereira*, the protagonist's moral awakening can be interpreted as reflecting Sartre's assertion in *Existentialism Is a Humanism* that individuals must take responsibility for their values and actions, even in the face of oppressive societal norms (Sartre). Pereira's struggle for ethical integrity mirrors Camus' concept of the *absurd* in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, where meaning must be created despite the indifference of existence (Camus). In this sense, Pereira's journey serves as a tribute to Tabucchi's skillful incorporation of existentialist thought into his narrative, as seen when the protagonist reflects: "La verità non si può nascondere per sempre (The truth can't be hidden forever.)" (*Sostiene Pereira*).

Heidegger's philosophical concepts of time and being resonate throughout Tabucchi's narratives, particularly in *Requiem*. Time is not portrayed as a fixed, linear sequence but as a fluid, subjective experience. This depiction aligns with Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*, where time is understood as a lived, relational phenomenon (Heidegger). In *Requiem*, Tabucchi writes: "Il tempo non è un fiume che scorre, ma piuttosto un mare immobile che ci sommerge" ("Time is not a flowing river, but rather a still sea that engulfs us") (*Requiem*, Tabucchi, 1992). This evocative metaphor captures Antonio Tabucchi's distinctive approach to time, portraying it not as a linear sequence but as a vast, still expanse that permeates human existence. This conceptualization of time goes beyond conventional perceptions, emphasizing its subjective nature and its role in shaping identity and meaning. In *Requiem*, the protagonist's journey through a dreamlike Lisbon serves as a vivid exploration of how time and memory intertwine, creating a space where past and present coexist and inform one another.

Tabucchi's depiction of time as a "still sea" underscores its psychological and emotional dimensions, particularly as they relate to memory and nostalgia. The protagonist's encounters with figures from his past—both real and imagined—illustrate how memory is not merely a record of chronological events but a fluid and reconstructive process. These memories, often tinged with longing and regret, provide a means of grappling with unresolved aspects of the self, highlighting nostalgia's dual nature as both a yearning for what was and an acknowledgment of its irretrievability.

Through this lens, time becomes a medium for reconciliation, allowing the protagonist to confront and integrate aspects of his identity shaped by past experiences. This process aligns with existential themes of self-discovery and authenticity, where understanding one's past is essential for making sense of the present. In this way, Tabucchi's treatment of time resonates with philosophical ideas like Heidegger's *Dasein*, which frames human existence as inherently temporal and bound to the interplay of past, present, and future (Heidegger).

Moreover, Tabucchi's fluid representation of time enriches his narratives with a dreamlike quality, where the boundaries between reality and imagination blur. In *Requiem*, the protagonist's journey through Lisbon becomes a metaphorical voyage through his own psyche, with each encounter shedding light on different facets of his identity. This interplay between time, memory, and nostalgia serves not only as a central theme in the novel but also as a hallmark of Tabucchi's literary artistry.

By portraying time as an "immobile sea", Tabucchi invites readers to reflect on their own experiences of memory and identity. His narratives remind us that time is not something we pass through but something that surrounds and shapes us, offering both the challenge and the opportunity to reconcile with the fragments of our lives. In this way, Tabucchi's exploration of time becomes a profound meditation on the human condition, making his works timeless in their relevance and emotional depth.

Through these philosophical underpinnings, Tabucchi's works explore the complexities of human existence, using narratives to reflect on the ethical and existential challenges faced by his characters. This approach not only enriches his storytelling but also invites readers to engage with profound philosophical questions.

Identity and the Influence of Pessoa

Antonio Tabucchi's engagement with identity is profoundly influenced by Fernando Pessoa's literary innovations, particularly the poet's use of heteronyms—distinct personas that each represent a unique worldview and voice. Pessoa's heteronyms were not merely pseudonyms; they were fully realized characters, each with their own biographies, writing styles, and philosophical outlooks. This approach to identity as fragmented and multifaceted resonates deeply with Tabucchi's exploration of the self in his own works. For Tabucchi, identity is not a static construct but a fluid and evolving phenomenon, shaped by context, memory,

relationships, and even the act of storytelling itself. Tabucchi adopts this concept of fragmented selfhood, portraying identity as fluid and context-dependent rather than fixed. In *The Game of Reversals*, the characters struggle to reconcile their personal authenticity with the societal roles they are compelled to perform. This dynamic reflects Pessoa's approach to identity, as seen in the poet's declaration that "to pretend is to know oneself" (Pessoa), a perspective echoed in Tabucchi's exploration of selfhood.

This thematic focus also resonates with Nietzsche's philosophical notion of multiplicity and the pursuit of personal authenticity. Nietzsche's assertion that "one must still have chaos in oneself to give birth to a dancing star" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) aligns with Tabucchi's depiction of identity as layered, contradictory, and continually evolving. In *Requiem*, for instance, the protagonist's encounters with figures from his past reveal how memory and relationships continuously reshape the self. Similarly, in *Notturmo indiano*, the protagonist's search for his missing friend becomes a metaphorical journey into the fragmented layers of his own identity (Tabucchi *Notturmo indiano*).

Tabucchi's narratives encourage readers to reflect on the interplay between individuality and societal expectations. For example, in *Sostiene Pereira*, the titular character undergoes a transformation as he confronts the tension between his passive, apolitical persona and his growing moral conscience in a dictatorial society. These stories, deeply inspired by Pessoa's heteronyms and Nietzschean philosophy, emphasize that identity is not a singular truth but a kaleidoscope of experiences, choices, and external pressures that define the human condition.

Emotional and Interpersonal Complexity

Antonio Tabucchi's works are marked by a profound exploration of human relationships, where themes of miscommunication, silence, and emotional distance frequently emerge. His

narratives depict the fragility and complexity of interpersonal connections, often centering on love, loss, solitude, and moral courage. In *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza* (*Little Misunderstandings of No Importance*), for instance, the characters' lives are shaped by small but significant missteps in communication and decision-making, which ripple into deeper emotional consequences. The titular story's protagonist, Tonino, reflects on the misunderstandings that have defined his relationships, remarking that they are "small misunderstandings without remedy" (Tabucchi *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza*). This reflection captures Tabucchi's recurring motif of missed opportunities and unspoken truths in human connections.

Tabucchi also demonstrates an empathetic portrayal of vulnerability and resilience, emphasizing the emotional depth of his characters. In *Sostiene Pereira*, Pereira's solitude and grief over his late wife form a poignant backdrop to his moral awakening. Through Pereira's interactions with Monteiro Rossi and other characters, Tabucchi examines the transformative power of relationships, even when burdened by emotional distance.

Through these stories, Tabucchi reveals the dual nature of human connections: they can both wound and heal. His characters' struggles with silence, emotional distance, and unspoken desires underscore the resilience required to navigate love and loss. By presenting relationships with such nuance and empathy, Tabucchi invites readers to confront their own vulnerabilities and reflect on the intricate interplay of connection and solitude in their lives.

Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Awakening

Antonio Tabucchi's narratives often explore ethical dilemmas and the profound moral awakenings of his characters, reflecting a strong engagement with existential ethics. His works emphasize the importance of moral responsibility and authentic existence, particularly in times of social and political turmoil. In *Sostiene Pereira*, the protagonist's journey exemplifies this

theme. Pereira, initially an apathetic and politically disengaged journalist, gradually awakens to the oppressive realities of Salazar's Portugal. This transformation reflects the existentialist idea that individuals must take responsibility for their actions and align their lives with authentic values, even in the face of great risk (Sartre). By the novel's end, Pereira's decision to publish a subversive article against the regime marks his moral commitment to truth and justice, embodying a shift from passivity to ethical agency (Tabucchi *Sostiene Pereira*).

Tabucchi's portrayal of ethical dilemmas is enriched by his exploration of psychological complexity. In *Sostiene Pereira*, the protagonist grapples with doubt, fear, and inner conflict as he questions his own complicity in an unjust system. His conversations with Dr. Cardoso introduce the "theory of the confederation of souls," suggesting that human beings are composed of multiple inner voices, and that a dominant "hegemonic self" can shift over time. This theory resonates with Pereira's journey, as he moves from complacency to courageous action, demonstrating the psychological struggle inherent in ethical decision-making (Tabucchi *Sostiene Pereira*).

Tabucchi's characters often face similar moments of moral reckoning, where they are called to confront their fears and make choices that define their authenticity. These narratives not only highlight the emotional weight of ethical decisions but also invite readers to reflect on their own capacity for courage and moral responsibility. By intertwining existential ethics with psychological nuance, Tabucchi crafts stories that explore the intricate interplay between thought, emotion, and action in the pursuit of authentic living.

Synthesis of Philosophy and Psychology

Antonio Tabucchi's works seamlessly integrate philosophy and psychology, creating narratives that deeply explore the human condition. Central to this interdisciplinary synthesis are the themes of time, memory, and nostalgia, which Tabucchi approaches through a lens informed

by thinkers such as Martin Heidegger and Henri Bergson. In *Requiem*, for instance, time is presented not as a linear progression but as a lived experience, deeply tied to memory and identity. This perspective aligns with Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*, where time is understood as a relational and subjective phenomenon shaping human existence (Heidegger). According to Heidegger, time is a central concept and is analyzed in relation to the *Dasein*, the being of the human understood as "being-in-the-world." Heidegger rejects the traditional conception of time as a linear sequence of moments, proposing instead a phenomenological interpretation that focuses on the temporal experience of *Dasein*. *Dasein* is not a static entity but exists and understands itself through its temporality, which is the foundation of its existence and allows the understanding of the meaning of being. For Heidegger, time is not external to *Dasein* but constitutive of its existence.

Heidegger describes time as composed of three intertwined dimensions or ecstasies of time: the future, where *Dasein* projects itself towards possibilities; the past, which is not merely what has happened but what *Dasein* has inherited or assumed, shaping its being; and the present, where *Dasein* is actively engaged with the world. The authentic temporality of *Dasein* is thus a dynamic interplay between these three dimensions.

Authentic time manifests when *Dasein* consciously embraces its finitude and projects its being towards its ultimate possibility: death. This allows a mode of being that integrates the entirety of existence. Conversely, inauthentic time is experienced as fragmented, where time is reduced to a sequence of isolated moments, typical of everydayness and alienation. *Dasein's* relationship with death is central to its understanding of time. Death represents the ultimate horizon of time, giving unity and meaning to existence. Anticipating death propels *Dasein* into an authentic mode of being, where it becomes aware of its freedom and responsibility to shape its existence.

Heidegger argues that temporality is the key to understanding being itself. Being is revealed through time, and time, in turn, can only be understood through the lived experience of *Dasein*. Heidegger states: "The primordial unity of the structure of care lies in temporality" (Heidegger 375). Temporality is not merely a linear succession of moments; instead, it is a dynamic and intertwined structure. As Heidegger explains, "The future is not later than having been, and having been is not earlier than the present. Temporality is not a sequence of distinct 'nows,' running off one after another" (378).

Heidegger distinguishes between authentic and inauthentic modes of experiencing time. Authentic time arises when *Dasein* fully embraces its finitude and projects itself toward its ultimate possibility. "Anticipation of death discloses to *Dasein* its ownmost being-possible—non-relational, certain, and as such, not to be outstripped" (294). In contrast, inauthentic time fragments existence into isolated moments, alienating *Dasein* from its potentiality-for-being. Ultimately, Heidegger concludes, "Temporality makes possible the understanding of Being" (488).

Similarly, Bergson's notion of *durée*, which emphasizes time as a continuous flow of lived moments, resonates in Tabucchi's depiction of memory as fluid and emotionally charged. As the protagonist of *Requiem* encounters figures from his past in a dreamlike Lisbon, Tabucchi illustrates how time and memory intertwine to define identity and meaning (Tabucchi *Requiem*).

Nostalgia emerges as a central emotional theme, functioning as both a longing for the past and an awareness of its irretrievability. In *Notturmo indiano*, the protagonist's journey through India reflects not only a search for a missing friend but also a deeper exploration of his own fragmented identity, shaped by memories and regrets. This dual nature of nostalgia captures its bittersweet essence, serving as both a source of connection to one's past and a reminder of its unattainability (Tabucchi *Notturmo indiano*). Tabucchi's treatment of nostalgia

invites readers to reflect on their own relationship with time, emphasizing its role in shaping identity and emotional experience.

By combining philosophical inquiry with psychological depth, Tabucchi's works transcend disciplinary boundaries. His portrayal of time as a lived experience and nostalgia as a complex emotional force offers profound insights into the ways in which human beings navigate memory, identity, and meaning. This integration of philosophy and psychology highlights the richness of Tabucchi's literary vision, making his narratives resonate on both intellectual and emotional levels.

Conclusion

Antonio Tabucchi's body of work holds immense relevance for students and scholars of philosophy, psychology, and literature, offering rich material for interdisciplinary exploration. His ability to weave philosophical inquiry and psychological depth into his narratives provides profound insights into the complexities of human existence. Tabucchi's engagement with themes such as identity, memory, time, and morality not only enriches his storytelling but also positions his works as a bridge between academic disciplines and artistic expression.

For readers, Tabucchi's writings serve as an invitation to engage in critical thinking, fostering an awareness of the emotional and ethical dimensions of life. His exploration of vulnerability, resilience, and the human psyche encourages the development of emotional intelligence, while his cultural and historical contexts enhance readers' appreciation for diverse perspectives. In works like *Sostiene Pereira* and *Requiem*, readers are prompted to confront ethical dilemmas and existential questions, reflecting on their own values and sense of self.

Ultimately, Tabucchi's synthesis of philosophy, psychology, and literary artistry transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, offering a unique lens through which to explore the human condition. His narratives challenge, inspire, and illuminate, ensuring his enduring

legacy as a writer who not only tells stories but also expands our understanding of what it means to live and connect as human beings.

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About the Author

Dr. Barbara Gabriella Renzi is a psychologist and academic with extensive experience across multiple countries, including Italy, Northern Ireland, and Germany. Currently residing in Germany, Dr. Renzi has worked with immigrant communities and in suicide prevention, demonstrating a strong commitment to mental health and social well-being. She holds dual PhDs: one in Philosophy and Cognitive Sciences from Queen's University Belfast, specializing in cognitive metaphors, and another in Culture, Education, and Communication from Roma Tre University, focusing on mediation in conflict zones and psychological interventions.

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