



CINEMA Paradiso (Giuseppe Tornatore, France-Italy 1989)

The film tells the story of a boy living in a Sicilian village, where he spends every free moment at the local moviehouse, Cinema Paradiso. Enchanted by the oscillating images, Salvatore (Toto) wants with all his heart for the movies to be truly magical. One day, Alfredo, the projectionist, agrees to teach the young boy the mysteries hidden within film. All of the village children grow up without losing their love for the movies. The day arrives when Salvatore must leave the village and search out his own dreams. He does so over the course of thirty years until he one day receives a message saying he must return home where a secret awaits him.

THE LONELINESS OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

This is the story of a path that is taken with the full knowledge there is no looking back. And this idea –that of no return– is present in Alfredo’s firm tone when he tells the young Toto: “I don’t want to hear you talk anymore. I want to hear others talking about you. Don’t come back. Don’t think about us.”

What drives Alfredo to push Toto away from Giancaldo, from his family, from his friends, from the security of the environment in which he has grown up? Maybe it’s his blind faith that Toto can become someone great in a place where there are more opportunities. He knows that the boy is restless, with many raw abilities to be developed and he thinks that far away from the village he will be able to find the fulfillment that would otherwise evade him. Or maybe he’s sending the boy off to seek the opportunities and success of his own dreams but that he never had the courage to pursue...

Whatever the case, Alfredo was right, for Toto became Salvatore, *Signore Salvatore*, an important person in the movie industry. Toto becomes well known, achieves notoriety and the resulting economic status. With his departure, however, Toto also faces a kind of *exile of the soul*, a deep loneliness that he cannot erase even after so many years.

“The loneliness of the entrepreneur.” “The loneliness of the leader.” “Fame brings loneliness.” What makes these frequently heard axioms true?

Why does an executive feel alone when leaving the team to become its leader? When someone leaves the position they’ve enjoyed in the comfort of the group and takes a step forward to become a leader, a point of reference, why is there a deep sense of distance from the others, of being misunderstood by those who, until now, had been colleagues?

It is an intriguing process since it is produced simultaneously on both sides: there’s a distance promoted both by those who stay behind –who automatically look suspiciously at whoever stands out– and by the one who leaves –who quickly finds a new position on the map and places vast amounts of buffers between the present and the past to act as protection, and just maybe to ward off the desire to return.

However, it is impossible to return, even if we aren’t successful in the endeavor that first took us away from the group that, for a time, was our security.

Maybe, as entrepreneurs, we ought to practice the ability of living in two spheres: go to the city but leave one foot back in our hometown; lead, but without forgetting what it feels like to be another team member. All this will help us grow deeper as persons, and will enable us to understand and foresee many situations.

Loneliness enjoys notorious fame, but if it is to become our traveling companion, maybe we should start negotiating a truce with it; for sure it can become welcoming and friendly toward us. And besides, the sensation of never having started the adventure is even more painful.