

## Document Citation

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Directed by Vittorio De Sica; story and screenplay by Cesare Zavattini based on his novel "Toto Il Buono." With Francesco Golisano, Paolo Stoppa, Emma Gramatica. Grand Prize, Cannes Film Festival; First Prize, New York Film Critics. Italian dialog with English subtitles.

Vittorio De Sica's theme is human brotherhood; his form is a comic fable -- part social satire, part fantasy. A fun-loving old lady finds a newborn baby in a cabbage patch. The baby becomes Toto the Good, the happy man who loves everyone; when he is frustrated in his desire to help people, the old lady, now an angel, comes down and gives him the power to work miracles. The meaning is clearly "Blessed are the good in heart, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," but this is given an ironic edge, for what the comedy demonstrates is that they certainly have no kingdom on earth.

The film provides a beautiful role for that great, almost legendary lady of the Italian theatre, Emma Gramatica. (Many, many years ago she took over Duse's roles and acted under the direction of D'Annunzio). As the angelic old rattlebrain, the supremely silly woman of De Sica's fairy tale, she is as yielding and permissive as his Umberto D. is proud and stubborn.

Toto the hero is naive and full of love; he organizes a hobo shantytown into an ideal community, and when the community is threatened he acquires magic powers to protect it. But the social contradictions are ludicrously hopeless; not even magic can resolve them. The failure of experience, as in The Bicycle Thief and Umberto D., is tragic, but the failure of innocence is touchingly absurd. As De Sica handles it, it becomes stylized poetry; it suggests a childlike view of Dostoevsky's The Idiot. Francesco Golisano is perfect as Tot; the heroine, Brunella Bovo is what Chaplin's heroines should have been but weren't. --- Pauline Kael

"...the freshest movie in years...accents the positive ideal of human brotherhood in a warm, exhilarating, richly comic picture. And in its wealth of visual ideas, its deft use of music, its passages of bitter-sweet humor, stylized playfulness and social satire, the picture recalls the best of Charlie Chaplin and Rene Clair. But it is also an original work of art, touched in its finest moments with the elusive magic of poetry." --- Time