

There Is No Such Thing as Bad Press

Once, the phrase meant survival. A struggling artist, a small business, a scandal-touched public figure—any attention was better than silence. Exposure was oxygen. Being talked about, even negatively, meant remaining visible in a crowded world. But in the modern media environment, this logic has mutated. There is no such thing as bad press is no longer a survival strategy. It is a permission structure. In a world governed by metrics—views, clicks, shares, impressions—attention itself has become the currency. Algorithms do not measure truth, integrity, or consequence. They measure engagement. Outrage travels faster than nuance. Conflict outperforms context. Sensation outpaces reflection. What once would have been reputational damage is now simply reach. Shame, once a social corrective, is increasingly obsolete. Public figures can be exposed for exploitation, cruelty, manipulation, or hypocrisy—and remain powerful so long as they remain visible. The scandal is not an end; it is a multiplier. Every denunciation is also a signal boost. Every moral objection becomes free advertising. This is not accidental. It is systemic. Media no longer functions primarily as a forum for understanding. It functions as a marketplace of attention. Stories are selected not for their significance, but for their ability to provoke reaction. Controversy is profitable. Polarization is sticky. Outrage is renewable. The rot does not begin with lies. It begins with indifference to meaning. When all attention is equalized into data points, ethics becomes irrelevant. The system does not ask whether something is right—it asks whether it performs. What circulates is what survives. What shocks is what spreads. What degrades is what endures. And so a new kind of figure emerges: the shameless. Those who understand that in a media economy driven by visibility, the only real failure is to be ignored. They do not fear condemnation. They harvest it. They do not seek respect. They seek saturation. This is where devolution takes on its most subtle form. Not in censorship. Not in propaganda. But in the erosion of standards themselves. When cruelty, deception, exploitation, and spectacle are rewarded with amplification, they cease to be aberrations. They become strategies. When behavior once considered disqualifying becomes simply “content,” society quietly rewrites its moral boundaries. The audience, too, is altered. We are conditioned to react rather than reflect. To consume outrage without metabolizing it. To scroll past harm, mock it, share it, argue over it—without ever demanding that it stop. We become participants in the very system we claim to despise. This is not the death of truth. It is the death of consequence. In such a world, power no longer needs legitimacy. It only needs visibility. Influence no longer requires trust. It requires reach. Reputation is no longer built on character—it is built on attention density. The phrase “there is no such thing as bad press” reveals the architecture of our moment: a culture in which morality has been abstracted into metrics, and accountability dissolved into engagement. And that is the special role of media in this phase of devolution. Not to deceive us outright—but to make us numb to meaning itself. When everything becomes content, nothing remains sacred. When exposure replaces ethics, nothing remains disqualifying. When shame evaporates, the only remaining boundary is popularity. StopDystopia is not asking us to reject media. It is asking us to remember what it once promised: to inform, to

challenge, to bear witness, to hold power to account. Because a civilization that cannot distinguish between attention and value does not merely lose its way.

It forgets why it ever had one.