**Scandals are useful because they focus our attention on problems in ways that no speaker or reformer ever could.**

**Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the claim. In developing and supporting your position, be sure to address the most compelling reasons and/or examples that could be used to challenge your position.**

The efficacy of scandals is what lets tabloids continue to sell their copies; scandals are used to sensationalize news stories irrespective of their validity, by the use of words to provoke strong public emotion. One could argue that scandals are detrimental to the lives of those who are wrongly accused of misconduct or other acts, and that the sensationalism is a vehicle for toxicity and peddling rumours. However, I mostly agree with the prompt’s claim that scandals are, in fact, useful in focusing our attention on problems in ways that speakers or reformers simply cannot. There are three main points to warrant this stance.

First, scandals are a way for misinformation to be exposed, and can thus help an increasingly online society to learn about the products they consume. Consider the ‘Pink Sauce’ trend from 2021: On an online platform called TikTok, a trend was started where people would purchase a condiment from online that had a vivid magenta/pink colour, and would use it on food like fried chicken. One seller of this product made them at home, bottled them up, and sold them online. In some cases, her products even reached the shelves of convenience stores. However, after a scandal broke out about the safety associated with the product, people learned that the product was not FDA-approved, i.e., it was not yet approved by the relevant authorities. There were some milk-based ingredients, which could get spoilt over time or during transit, which could prove to be a potential health hazard for consumers. Not only did this scandal cause a lot of people to check the ingredients and potential harm that the ‘pink sauce’ has, but it also encouraged people to always check the ingredients and safety of the food they consume.

Second, scandals may lead to the downfall of celebrities who are not held unaccountable in situations where they are possibly causing harm. Take the example of the YouTube personality Shane Dawson: He was a well-loved creator on the video platform, accruing tens of millions of views on his documentary-style videos. However, during the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, some of his older videos resurfaced, and were found to be objectionable and potentially harmful for his younger audience. One may say that the contents of these videos were representative of a time when jokes were edgier, or that his type of humour has also developed through the years. After people further analysed a movie he had directed in the past, and went through multiple older clips, sometimes making their own ‘documentaries’ based on his YouTube career, what stuck out to most people was his lack of acknowledgement or apology. A scandal was built around this whole situation, and he lost a significant chunk of his fanbase after an apology that he issued, that they perceived as rather disingenuous and insincere. It was reasonable to conclude that his actions were not normal for the contemporary sense of humour, and were quite off-putting, even for that point in time. Hence, scandals can have the effect of letting people analyse celebrities in their entirety, without being confined to just their ‘present-day’ selves, potentially exposing a different side of them.

However, there is one aspect to concede to the opposing view: Scandals can be overly damaging or blown out of proportion. There are many who use conspiracy theories to push forward any scandals that are even slightly true, reducing the quality of discourse in public spaces. Political parties in increasingly polarized countries have been observed to pick up every opportunity to use scandals as tools to make a case against their opponents. Not only can this lead to a sense of ‘incorrectness’ in political discussion, but it may greatly skew public perception of figures based on baseless allegations. This does not discount the benefits of scandals in the ‘blogosphere,’ but does dampen the strong opinions and evidence that one may have to support the stance in favour of scandals.

In conclusion, I mostly agree with the prompt’s claim. There are no easy answers when it comes to this issue; there is a lot of nuance and lots of online evidence that could support either stance. Hence, scandals are, on average, good for bringing attention to problems that most people could not. Their use as a political weapon, however, must be taken seriously, with efforts to fact-check their claims.