

THE HOMELANDER IN JUDICIAL ROBES

A Symbolic Reflection on Unrestrained Power in Constitutional Democracy

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1. Introduction: The Profile of *Homelander* and Its Metaphorical Power

1.1. Who Homelander Is

Homelander - *Capitão Pátria* in the Brazilian dubbed version - is the central antagonist of the series *"The Boys"*, produced by Amazon Prime Video and adapted from the homonymous comics by Garth Ennis and Darick Robertson. Portrayed by New Zealand actor Antony Starr, he occupies the position of leader of *"The Seven"*, the principal superhero team managed by the Vought International corporation, and is described, within the fictional universe, as the most powerful being on Earth. His narrative relevance transcends the function of mere villain: he operates as a **critical device**, a distorting mirror that returns to contemporary society an uncomfortable image of its own mechanisms of power-worship.

1.2. Origin and Superhuman Attributes

The figure of Homelander was not born of natural processes nor of heroism earned by merit; he was **manufactured in a laboratory** through the application of the chemical compound known as *"Compound V"*, in a procedure that from the outset lays bare the artificiality of his messianic aura. He presents himself as a dark, perverted version of classical heroic archetypes - especially Superman - endowed with massive superstrength, the capacity of flight, heat vision capable of incinerating matter, and extraordinarily acute hearing. In the fifth season, broadcast in 2026, the character reaches an even

more disturbing tier upon gaining access to "V1", the original formulation of the compound, becoming, according to the narrative, biologically immortal.

1.3. The Personality Behind the Mask

The contrast between façade and essence constitutes the dramatic axis of the character. Publicly, he projects the image of a **charismatic hero**, an enthusiastic defender of national values, with a permanent smile and a carefully calibrated patriotic discourse. Internally, however, he reveals himself to be deeply **narcissistic, emotionally unstable, compulsively dependent on external validation, and prone to extreme violence**, concealing dark secrets concerning his origins, his affective relationships, and the crimes committed far from the cameras. It is precisely this **dissociation between public persona and psychic structure** that renders Homelander so functional as a critical tool: he embodies the unsettling hypothesis that the official hero may simultaneously be the greatest existential risk to the community he claims to protect.

1.4. Central Conflicts and Dangerous Relationships

On the narrative plane, Homelander maintains a permanent antagonism with **Billy Butcher**, leader of the parallel group "*The Boys*", devoted to exposing and combating the abuses of corporate superheroes. Another central bond - and perhaps the most disturbing - is the one he sustains with his biological son Ryan, over whom he exerts progressively noxious psychological influence, replicating patterns of affective manipulation that he himself suffered during his laboratory formation.

1.5. The Political Reading Acknowledged by the Creator Himself

The series' *showrunner*, Eric Kripke, has publicly declared, in several interviews, that he conceives the character as a **deliberate metaphor for the megalomaniacal aspects of contemporary power** - particularly those figures who combine performative charisma, media manipulation, and an intimate contempt for the democratic institutions they rhetorically invoke. In May 2026, with the series approaching the finale of its fifth and final season, critical analyses multiply concerning the symbolic legacy of the character and the narrative possibilities of his eventual defeat - a debate that overflows the fictional universe and reaches the reflection on power, democracy, and institutional restraint.

1.6. Why Homelander Functions as an Institutional Mirror

There exist literary creatures that, at first glance, appear to be excessively overcharged caricatures, narrative exaggerations crafted to provoke aesthetic discomfort. However, there are moments when public life begins to mirror, with unsettling precision, what fiction had conceived as a warning. Homelander is one of those disturbing archetypes: he causes uneasiness not solely through the superhuman attributes he displays, but through the amalgam of unlimited power, **narcissism disguised as virtue**, ceaseless hunger for public recognition, and the intimate certainty of inhabiting a normative plane distinct from that reserved for ordinary mortals. He presents himself as sentinel of order, shield of society, guarantor of collective security, yet his actions lay bare something darker: the **metamorphosis of his own will into the parameter of the just**.

2. The Metaphor as a Critical Tool

2.1. The Fictional Character as Institutional Mirror

This literary figure functions as an uncomfortable - and precisely for that reason illuminating - metaphor for certain postures observable in the contemporary institutional landscape. In any genuine democratic arrangement, no public official, however elevated his position or strategic his function, is

authorized to convert the emblem of his office into an instrument of personal protection of the public good. When the one who ought to adjudicate begins simultaneously to investigate, formulate accusations, conduct procedures, deliberate, censor expressions, apply sanctions, and, moreover, legitimize this entire cycle by invoking the defense of institutions, the line that separates the exercise of jurisdiction from the exercise of **personal power** begins to fade dangerously.

2.2. The Heart of the Problem: Not the End, but the Means

The question that imposes itself does not lie in the declared purpose - the safeguarding of democracy - but in the methodology adopted to fulfill it. Constitutional democracy cannot endure being preserved by instruments that disfigure it in its essence. The **rule of law** grants no license to "*providential saviors*", nor does it recognize the figure of the "*institutional redeemer*". When a given magistrate conducts himself as if he were the ultimate bulwark of civilization against the other constituted Powers, against the free press, against the legitimately elected Parliament, against ordinary citizens, and even against the collegiality that defines the very Court he integrates, he abandons the role of constitutional judge and symbolically occupies the place of Homelander: the officially sanctioned hero who demands absolute trust precisely because he self-proclaims indispensable.

3. The Central Contradiction of Power Without Limits

The revealing force of the metaphor lies in laying bare the fundamental paradox of power deprived of institutional brakes: the more vehemently someone alleges to act in the name of democracy, the more threatening he becomes when dispensing with procedural rites, material limits, control mechanisms, and the **impersonality** that constitute the very conditions of possibility of the democratic regime. The robed Homelander needs not proclaim himself authoritarian; it suffices for him to act as if his individual decisions were, by mere emanation, the Constitution itself translated into act. The robe, in this scenario, ceases to be a symbol of submission to the norm and begins to function as a mantle that sacralizes the subjective will of the adjudicator.

4. The Lesson of Mature Constitutional Regimes

In mature democracies, solid institutions do not stand upon the shoulders of men deemed providential. They rest, on the contrary, upon **delimited competencies**, upon **due process of law**, upon **collegial decision-making**, upon **rational and reviewable reasoning**, upon the **separation of powers**, and upon the permanent discipline of **judicial self-restraint**. When such guardrails come to be perceived as obstacles to the deeply personal mission of redeeming the Republic, the Constitution is gradually reduced from a superior legal norm to a mere stage upon which performances of authority are enacted. The constitutional text, once binding, transforms itself into rhetorical paraphernalia - invoked when convenient, circumvented when inconvenient.

5. The Silent Erosion of the Democratic Pact

The most subtle risk of this configuration lies not in spectacular ruptures, but in the gradual corrosion of the presuppositions that render constitutional jurisdiction legitimate. Each concentration of incompatible functions in the same authority, each monocratic decision that supplants plural debate, each interpretive expansion that dispenses with rigorous reasoning, each gesture that confounds the defense of the Court with the defense of the specific judge - all such movements compose, taken together, a silent transmutation of the Tribunal into a stage. And the stage, as is well known, demands protagonists - a figure incompatible with the impersonal sobriety required of the

constitutional judge, who ought to be recognized by the quality of his arguments and not by the splendor of his public presence.

6. Egoic Self-Restraint as a Forgotten Constitutional Virtue

6.1. Beyond Juridical Self-Restraint: The Inner Brake of the Subject

Traditional constitutional doctrine has rightly consecrated the virtue of **judicial self-restraint** - that institutional discipline which orients the magistrate to respect the limits of his competence, to defer to legitimate legislative choices, and to refrain from substituting himself for the other Powers. Yet this category, however valuable, is insufficient to describe the deeper phenomenon here denounced. Prior to juridical self-restraint, there exists a still more fundamental and rarely named psychic presupposition: **egoic self-restraint**. It concerns the inner capacity, antecedent to the norm, by which the subject recognizes that he is not the measure of the just, that his personal perception does not constitute a normative parameter, that his moral intuition does not supplant the prevailing Constitution. It is the invisible brake that separates the judge from the vigilante.

6.2. The Moral Solipsism of the Adjudicator

When this inner brake breaks down, a phenomenon as subtle as it is devastating installs itself: **moral solipsism**.¹ The adjudicator begins to operate as if his conscience were the sole legitimate source of juridicity, as if the sense of justice pulsating in his chest possessed, by itself, normative force superior to that of the constitutional text, to that of the democratically enacted statute, to that of consolidated precedents, to that of shared juridical rationality itself. Everything comes to be filtered through a solitary certainty: *"if I believe it is just, then it is juridically correct"*. The Law, once an objective and intersubjectively verifiable order, degrades into a **moral monologue disguised as jurisdiction**. And worse still: this monologue self-proclaims virtuous, for the solipsist, by definition, is unable to perceive his solipsism - he sees only the luminous clarity of his own convictions, never the narcissistic opacity that produces them.

6.3. The Consequentialist Falsification of Law

From this follows one of the most perverse contemporary distortions of the exercise of jurisdiction: **selective consequentialism**, a respectable academic formulation which, ill-appropriated, converts itself into a sophisticated alibi for arbitrariness. The reasoning is always the same, and always suspect: *if the faithful application of the Constitution produces a result that I, the adjudicator, deem undesirable, then the Constitution yields; if observance of the statute leads to an outcome repugnant to my conscience, then the statute is circumvented; if due process protects someone whom I, in my inner forum, had previously deemed guilty, then due process is loosened*.

The end - always noble in the adjudicator's self-description - rhetorically sanctifies the means, and the means, gradually, devours the end itself. Machiavelli, at least, was honest about the operation; the robed Homelander, no - he convinces himself, and seeks to convince all, that **violating the Constitution is defending it**, that **suspending guarantees is protecting rights**, that **silencing voices is saving democracy**. It is hypocrisy elevated to the condition of method.

¹ Lenio Luiz Streck, in several works, denounces what he calls "judicial solipsism" and "decisionism"; Ronald Dworkin criticizes what he terms "legal pragmatism" (in *"Law's Empire"*); and Ingeborg Maus, in the classic *"The Judiciary as the Society's Superego"* (in Portuguese, *"Judiciário como Superego da Sociedade"*), analyzes precisely this moral hypertrophy of the adjudicator who substitutes the norm with his own conscience.

6.4. *Hybris* as Constitutional Disease

The ancient Greeks had a precise word for this: "*hybris*" - the immoderation, the arrogance of the mortal who judges himself above the limits that structure the "*polis*". It was regarded, in classical tragedy, as the gravest moral fault, precisely because it destroyed not only the protagonist but the entire community that depended on him. The contemporary magistrate who loses egoic self-restraint reenacts, in a constitutional key, this very ancient tragedy. He imagines himself an Atlas sustaining the Republic upon his shoulders, when he is in fact but one of many public officials whose legitimacy depends, paradoxically, on the recognition of his own **dispensability**. He confounds the function he occupies with the person he is, and, in such confusion, transforms the office into **narcissistic extension**, the Court into stage, and the Constitution into scenic adornment. The result is grotesque: he who ought to serve the norm now demands that the norm serve him, and when the norm resists, he rewrites it - not through the legitimate path of reform, but through the spurious path of creative interpretation that transforms every decision into constitutional mutation in disguise.

6.5. The Cynical Appeal to the Defense of Democracy

The most corrosive dimension of this phenomenon is the **rhetorical cynicism** that accompanies it. Every violation is presented as sacrifice; every concentration of power, as a burden accepted out of love for the homeland; every arbitrary decision, as a heroic gesture by one who "*had no choice*". The adjudicator who abandons egoic self-restraint never admits to acting out of vanity, out of ambition, out of enjoyment of power - he admits only to fulfilling a historical duty, bearing a burden that no one else would dare to carry. It is the aesthetics of martyrdom applied to the exercise of arbitrariness. And this narrative, unless denounced, contaminates the collective imaginary, creating the most dangerous scenario for any democracy: a public that **applauds its own jailer**, convinced that the shackles are civic ornaments.

6.6. The Antidote: The Recognition of One's Own Smallness

Egoic self-restraint, therefore, is neither a psychological detail nor a merely moral requirement; it is a **structural condition of possibility** of constitutionalism. Without it, all other guarantees become dead letter, for the adjudicator who deems himself above the norm will always find elegant justifications to circumvent it. Its presence is not demonstrated by grandiloquent declarations of modesty - which, incidentally, are most suspicious when uttered - but by concrete gestures of submission to legality: accepting limits, refusing protagonism, deferring to collegiality, reasoning with epistemic humility, recognizing that one's own conviction may be mistaken, bearing criticism without institutional retaliation, forgoing the spotlight that the function itself does not require. In a word: the truly democratic constitutional judge is the one who **prefers to be forgotten by history rather than remembered for the hypertrophy of his own ego**. Everything else is performance.

- **Logic of the Robed Homelander, Egoic Self-Restraint, and the Limits of Constitutional Jurisdiction**

The logic that structures this reflection departs from a simple finding: **power without restraint is incompatible with constitutional democracy**, however clothed in the best declared intentions. The Homelander metaphor operates because it captures the phenomenon of the public agent who internalizes the conviction of being indispensable and, from such self-perception, progressively dispenses with the limits the Constitution imposes upon him. The critical point lies not in the content of isolated decisions, but in the **structure of power** that takes shape when the functions of investigating, accusing, judging, executing, and justifying converge in the hands of a single figure.

Democracy is a system that institutionally distrusts its own servants - not because it presumes bad faith, but because it recognizes that any concentration of power, however well-intentioned, tends toward degeneration. The "*institutional savior*" is a figure logically incompatible with constitutionalism, which was historically conceived precisely to render providential heroes dispensable. When a magistrate comes to be perceived - or perceives himself - as indispensable to the survival of institutions, something has already broken: the Constitution has ceased to function as norm and has come to depend on a personal will in order to subsist.

The category of **egoic self-restraint** explains why merely juridical self-restraint is insufficient: prior to the normative limit lies the psychic limit, the recognition that the subject is not the measure of the just, that his moral intuition does not supplant the Constitution, that his sense of justice belongs only to him - solipsistic, partial, fallible, contingent - and can never claim the status of norm. When that inner brake breaks down, moral solipsism installs itself, and from it follows the selective consequentialism that converts the Constitution into an obstacle to be circumvented in the name of supposedly noble ends. The final paradox is cruel: he who presents himself as absolute guardian becomes, by the very logic of concentration and immoderation, the greatest threat to that which he claims to protect. The constitutional remedy, therefore, does not lie in replacing the robed Homelander with another hero, but in **restoring the impersonality, the collegiality, the institutional brakes, and, above all, the epistemic humility** that render any savior unnecessary and any ego, at last, contained.

Final Considerations

The force of the proposed parallel does not lie in reducing a concrete agent to the caricature of a fictional villain, but in illuminating, with the resources of critical literature, a recurring pattern in contemporary democracies: the temptation of **institutional salvationism** fed by the **collapse of egoic self-restraint**. When the one who ought to be merely a qualified interpreter of the Constitution begins to present himself as its strictly personal incarnation, the constitutional regime undergoes a silent mutation - the rites persist, the symbols survive, but the democratic substance drains away. The "*robed Homelander*", therefore, is not an individual figure but a **structural position** that may be occupied by any agent who succumbs to the seduction of believing himself indispensable.

There is, however, one point that warrants final underlining in heavy ink: no institutional system, however well-designed, survives without the **inner brake of the subjects who operate it**. One may draft the finest Constitution in the world, multiply control mechanisms, prescribe detailed competencies, establish appeals upon appeals, and still see everything collapse if those who occupy the decision-making seats lack the most elementary and most difficult of all virtues: **epistemic humility**, the bitter and liberating awareness that **no human being, however brilliant, however well-intentioned, however convinced, is the measure of the just**. The magistrate who replaces the Constitution with his conscience - even if his conscience be, in his own opinion, especially luminous - is not defending the Republic; he is confessing, perhaps without realizing it, that the Republic does not suffice for him. And that confession, whether spoken or silenced, is the first symptom that the robed one has already become Homelander.

Democratic vigilance consists, precisely, in refusing such a figure - not because his purposes are necessarily vile, but because constitutional democracy was historically built to survive **without heroes** and, above all, **in spite of them**. The great paradox, and perhaps the greatest irony of modern constitutionalism, is that its health is measured not by the visibility of its protagonists but by the **healthy institutional mediocrity** of those who serve it - a word used here in laudatory sense, in the original Latin

acceptation of "*medius*", of the middle, of the balanced, of the contained. When the constitutional judge accepts to be merely one more servant of the norm, and not its secret author, the Constitution breathes. When, on the contrary, he self-proclaims indispensable, the Constitution is already being buried - sometimes with pomp, sometimes in silence, but always under the weight of a robe that weighs more than it should. And then, lamentably, what one beholds is no longer a tribunal: it is a stage. It is no longer a judge: it is a character. It is no longer constitutional democracy: it is merely a sophisticated "*cosplay*" of it, clothed in red beneath the black robe, demanding applause while the Republic bleeds in silence.

8. Synoptic Table

Topic	Explanation
Homelander as archetype	Fictional character from the series " <i>The Boys</i> ", created in a laboratory through " <i>Compound V</i> " and leader of " <i>The Seven</i> ". He synthesizes unlimited power, moral vanity, compulsive need for applause, and an intimate conviction of normative superiority. He functions as a literary metaphor for the public agent who confounds institutional function with personal redemptive mission.
Dissociation between persona and essence	Central trait of Homelander: the façade of the charismatic hero conceals a narcissistic, unstable, and violent psychic structure. Applied institutionally, it describes the agent who projects the public image of guardian of democracy while internally operating according to a logic of personal power.
Robe and personal power	The judicial garment symbolizes submission to the norm and impersonality. When converted into an emblem of subjective authority, it ceases to represent the Constitution and begins to ratify the individual will of the adjudicator.
Confusion of functions	Characterized by the concentration, in a single authority, of the attributions of investigating, accusing, conducting, judging, censoring, punishing, and justifying. Such accumulation dissolves the boundary between jurisdiction and personal power, compromising due process of law.
Institutional salvationism	Posture by which the public agent perceives himself as the indispensable guardian of democracy. Logically incompatible with constitutionalism, which was conceived to render providential heroes dispensable.
Defense of democracy through antidemocratic methods	Central paradox of the phenomenon. Constitutional democracy does not admit being protected by means that disfigure it. The legitimate end (safeguarding institutions) does not validate the

	incompatible means (concentration of power and suppression of guarantees).
Impersonality as a pillar	Principle by which the public agent acts not as person but as institutional representative. Its dissolution is the gravest symptom of salvationism, for it transforms juridical decisions into manifestations of individual will.
Collegial decision-making	Containment mechanism that demands plural deliberation in courts. Its erosion through broad monocratic decisions converts collegial courts into unipersonal organs, to the detriment of constitutional debate.
Judicial self-restraint	Institutional virtue by which the magistrate recognizes the limits of his jurisdiction. Its absence produces an indefinite expansion of judicial power over domains that do not belong to it.
Egoic self-restraint	Deeper category, antecedent to juridical self-restraint. It designates the adjudicator's psychic capacity to recognize that he is not the measure of the just, that his personal conviction lacks normative status, and that his moral intuition does not supplant the Constitution. Structural presupposition of constitutionalism.
Moral solipsism	Pathology arising from the collapse of egoic self-restraint. The adjudicator treats his own conscience as the exclusive source of juridicity, transforming Law into a moral monologue disguised as jurisdiction.
Selective consequentialism	Sophisticated justification for arbitrariness: the Constitution and statute are circumvented whenever their faithful application would produce a result deemed undesirable by the adjudicator. It inverts the logic of the rule of law by allowing the end to legitimize the incompatible means.
Constitutional "hybris"	Contemporary reenactment of the Greek tragic immoderation. The magistrate who deems himself above institutional limits reproduces the classical arrogance that destroyed not only the protagonist but the entire " <i>polis</i> " that depended on him.
Rhetorical cynicism	Narrative strategy by which the adjudicator presents every violation as sacrifice, every concentration of power as heroic burden, and every arbitrary decision as fulfillment of a historical duty. The aesthetics of martyrdom applied to the exercise of arbitrariness.

Constitution as stage backdrop	Phenomenon in which the constitutional text ceases to function as binding norm and begins to operate as rhetorical backdrop for performances of authority. The Constitution is invoked when convenient; circumvented when inconvenient.
Silent erosion	Characteristic mode by which constitutionalism degrades. It does not occur through spectacular ruptures but through gradual corrosion of institutional presuppositions, decision by decision, gesture by gesture.
Providential heroes	Figures logically incompatible with mature constitutional regimes. Democracy rests upon structures, not upon personalities. When an institution depends on a specific man, it has already broken down as institution.
Epistemic humility	Virtue corresponding to egoic self-restraint. Recognition that one's own conviction may be mistaken, that plural debate is better than solitary certainty, and that the democratic judge prefers to be forgotten by history rather than remembered for the hypertrophy of his own ego.