

Ernesto Garzón Valdés: An Introduction to His Life and Works

Miguel Álvarez Ortega

*This essay draws a biographical sketch of one of the most influential legal philosophers in the Spanish-speaking world, Ernesto Garzón Valdés. It analyses his intellectual affiliation and stages, offers a reflective summary of his main contributions to legal philosophy, and finally a brief introductory note on his fundamental *Guerre y derechos humanos*. In this essay Garzón Valdés focuses on Kantian autonomy and the conceptual framework he designed to address paternalism to argue that while non-armed interventions are potentially justifiable, armed interventions are unjustifiable. This conclusion is not based on sovereignty issues but on the fact that such interventions inevitably violate the rights of innocent individuals.*

Keywords: Ernesto Garzón Valdés, Human Rights, Argentin Legal Philosophy, Kantian Autonomy, Concept of Law.

1. Introduction

Ernesto Garzón Valdés (1927–2023) is considered one of the most influential legal philosophers in the Spanish-speaking world. His extensive body of work, developed mainly through monographic articles, addresses nearly every key aspect of the discipline, from the validity of norms to organ transplantation. Most of them were published by the Spanish Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales in a collective volume entitled *Derecho, ética y política* (1993). Garzón Valdés acted as an academic bridge between the Anglo-German and Hispanic worlds, excelling as a teacher, researcher, and disseminator of ideas. His intellectual production inspired various doctoral theses, such as those on the legal limitations of sovereignty (Pérez Triviño¹) or legal paternalism (Macario Alemany²), as well as significant academic debates with prominent figures in Hispanic and Italian legal philosophy. Examples include discussions with

¹ José L. Pérez Triviño, *Los límites jurídicos al soberano*, Tecnos, Madrid 1998.

² Macario Alemany García, *El concepto y la justificación del paternalismo jurídico*, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Alicante 2005. <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/el-concepto-y-la-justificacion-del-paternalismo--0/>.