

Michael Löwy

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Michael Löwy ([Sao Paulo](#), [Brazil](#), 1938) is a French-Brazilian [Marxist sociologist](#) and [philosopher](#). He is emeritus research director in social sciences at the [CNRS](#) (French National Center of Scientific Research) and lectures at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales ([EHESS](#); [Paris](#), [France](#)). Author of books on [Karl Marx](#), [Che Guevara](#), [Liberation Theology](#), [György Lukács](#), [Walter Benjamin](#), [Lucien Goldmann](#) and [Franz Kafka](#), he received the Silver Medal of the CNRS in 1994.

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Academic career [\[edit\]](#)

A descendant from [Jewish](#) immigrants from [Vienna](#), Löwy grew up in São Paulo, Brazil, becoming a committed [socialist](#) at age 16 (1954), when discovering the writings of [Rosa Luxemburg](#). He studied at the [University of Sao Paulo](#), where he had as teachers [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Florestan](#)

[Fernandes](#) and [Antonio Candido](#)); he got his license in [Social Sciences](#) in 1960 and lectured [sociology](#) for a year at the University of [São José do Rio Preto](#) ([State of Sao Paulo](#)).

In 1961 he received a [scholarship](#) for a doctorate in [Paris, France](#), which he did under the guidance of the well known [Marxist](#) philosopher and sociologist of culture [Lucien Goldmann](#), who had a lasting influence on his views. He received his [PhD](#) in 1964, with a thesis on “Young Marx’s Theory of Revolution”, at the [Sorbonne](#) University.

Soon afterwards Löwy went to [Israel](#) where his family had migrated. He learned [Hebrew](#) and became lecturer in political philosophy at the [University of Tel Aviv](#), but his political views finished by creating problems, and the University refused to renew his contract in 1968. He was invited -in an act of solidarity- to lecture at the [University of Manchester](#), where he became assistant to the sociologist and founder of the [New Left Peter Worsley](#). (1968–1969).

In 1969 Löwy returned to Paris to work with [Nicos Poulantzas](#) at the [University of Paris VIII](#)(Vincennes), and from that moment on established himself definitely in France. In the 1970s he worked, under the direction of [Louis-Vincent Thomas](#), on his [Habilitation](#) (doctorat d'état) on [György Lukács](#) presented on 1975 at the [University of Paris V](#) (Sorbonne), and received with the honours. Löwy lectured sociology at the University of Paris VIII till 1978 when he was admitted as a researcher at the [CNRS](#).

In 1981 Löwy began also to lecture at the prestigious [École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales](#) in Paris; he has also been invited to lecture at [Stanford University](#), [University of California at Berkeley](#), [University of Michigan at Ann Arbor](#), [Columbia University](#) and [Harvard University](#), as well as other US Universities. In 1994 he received the Silver Medal of the CNRS.

He is emeritus [research director](#) in social sciences at the CNRS and teaches at the [EHESS](#). He is member of the editorial board of the Journals Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions, [Actuel Marx](#), [ContreTemps](#) and [Écologie et Politique](#), as well as a fellow and regular lecturer at the [International Institute for Research and Education](#) in [Amsterdam](#).

Scientific interests [\[edit\]](#)

Until 1985 most of Löwy’s works concerned the sociological and historical study of [Marxist thought](#). This applies not only to his doctorate on [Young Marx](#) and his Habilitation on [György Lukács](#), but to most of the essays which he published, some of which were collected in books, as well as for two anthologies, on the [National Question](#) (with [Georges Haupt](#) and [Claudie Weill](#)) and on [Marxism in Latin America](#). [Marxist epistemology](#) also takes a central place in his work on [sociology of knowledge](#) from 1985.

The methodological orientation of his research was inspired by [Lucien Goldmann](#)’s writings - particularly [The Hidden God](#), 1955)- whose approach, associating sociology and history, [heterodox Marxism](#) and [German sociology](#), the internal study of cultural works and their connexion to the [social structure](#), served him as starting point.

From the mid 1980's Löwy became interested in the [Central European Jewish Culture](#), in [Romantic anticapitalism](#) and on the complex interrelations between [religion](#) and [politics](#), particularly in [Latin America](#). The concept of [elective affinity](#), borrowed from [Max Weber](#), but re-interpreted, became one of the key methodological tools of his research. His latest books concern [Walter Benjamin's Theses on the Philosophy of History](#) (1940), which Löwy considers as one of the most important documents of [revolutionary thinking](#) since Marx's [Theses on Feuerbach](#); and [Franz Kafka](#) as an anti-authoritarian author, with [Anarchist](#) sympathies, whose novels are inspired by a sort of «religion of liberty».

In spite of the diversity of its thematic contents, most of Michael Löwy writings, since his PhD on [Marx](#) till now, belong to a [sociology of culture](#), of Marxist/historicist orientation. Inspired by Lukács and Lucien Goldman, they also refer to the great tradition of German sociology, from Weber to [Karl Mannheim](#). Their aim is to analyse, interpret and explain the relations between [cultural phenomena](#) - particularly religious and political- by situating them in precise social and historical contexts.

Commitments [\[edit\]](#)

Löwy is linked to the Revolutionary Marxist current in France, and one of his last books, on [Che Guevara](#), was written in collaboration with [Olivier Besancenot](#), [presidential candidate](#) of the LCR (French [Revolutionary Communist League](#)), linked to the [Fourth International](#). He is member of the association [ATTAC](#), of the [Copernicus Foundation](#) and of [Espaces Marx](#). He has kept intense political contacts in [Brazil](#).

During several years he cooperated with the left currents of the PT, the [Brazilian Workers Party](#), but during the last years his main contact has been with the MST, the Brazilian [Landless Workers Movement](#), to whom he gave the money of the prize "Sergio Buarque de Hollanda" which he received in 2000 for his book [The war of Gods](#).

Löwy took part since the beginning at the [World Social Forum](#), where he presented several papers, one of which in collaboration with the Brazilian Liberation Theologian [Frei Betto](#). More recently, Löwy joined the struggle for [ecosocialism](#); co-author, with [Joel Kovel](#), of the [International Ecosocialist Manifesto](#), he was also one of the organizers of the [First Ecosocialist International Meeting](#) in [Paris](#)(2007).

Interested since his youth by [Surrealism](#) -he had met the poet [Benjamin Péret](#) during a visit in Paris in 1958- Löwy joined the [Paris Surrealist Group](#), by invitation of [Vincent Bounoure](#), its main organizer since 1969. Two of his books are devoted to Surrealism, in its utopian and revolutionary dimension. Next to his Surrealist activities in Paris, Löwy has strong personal links to Surrealists in [Chicago](#), [Sao Paulo](#), [Buenos Aires](#), [Madrid](#), [Athens](#), etc.

Publications [\[edit\]](#)

- *The Marxism of Che Guevara*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973.

(Second Edition : Rowman and Littlefield, 2007. Also in French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Turkish, Persian & Thai).

- “Marxism and Revolutionary Romanticism”. *Telos* 49 (Fall 1981). New York: Telos Press.

- *Georg Lukács: from Romanticism to Bolchevism*, London, Verso, 1981.

(Also in French, Spanish, Italian, Swedish and Portuguese, Spanish).

- *The politics of combined and uneven development. The theory of permanent revolution*, London, Verso Books, 1981.

(Translated into German and Korean, Séoul).

- *Redemption and Utopia. Libertarian Judaism in Central Europe*, Stanford University Press, 1992.

(Also in French, Italian, Swedish, German, and Portuguese)

- *Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1992.

(Also in Spanish and Portuguese).

- *On Changing the World. Essays in political philosophy: from Karl Marx to Walter Benjamin*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1993. (Also in Japanese and Persian).

- *The war of gods. Religion and Politics in Latin America*, London, Verso, 1996.

(Also in Spanish, Portuguese and French).

- *Fatherland or Mother Earth? Essays on the national question*, London, Pluto Press, 1998.

(Also in Spanish and Portuguese).

- *Morning Star. Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism, Situationism, Utopia*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2000.

(Also in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Greek).

- *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity* (with Robert Sayre), Durham, Duke University Press, 2001.

(Also in French, Greek and Portuguese).

- *Franz Kafka, rêveur insoumis*, Paris, Editions Stock, 2004.

(Translated into Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and Greek).

- *Fire Alarm. Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, London, Verso, 2005.

(Also in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Greek).

- *The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx*, Chicago, Haymarket, 2005.

(Also in French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Japanese).

- *Che Guevara, une braise qui brûle encore*, with [Olivier Besancenot](#), Paris, Mille et une nuits, 2007.

(Published in English by [Monthly Review](#) Press. Translated into Greek? Soon to appear in Spanish and Portuguese).

- Löwy published more than 200 articles or chapters in collective books. His works have been published in 28 languages : French, English, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician, Danish, Swedish, Greek, Turkish, Hungarian, Rumanian, Polish, Czech, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Yiddish, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Korean, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Tamil.

Notes and references [\[edit\]](#)

- Richard Wolin, "A Metaphysical Materialist", *The Nation*, October 16, 2006, p. 30-35. <http://www.agenceglobal.com/article.asp?id=1>

057 On the site Agence Global.

- Joel Kovel and Michael Löwy, [\[1\]](#) Manifeste Ecosocialiste International

External links [\[edit\]](#)

- [All Michael Löwy's articles \(french language\) on *La Brèche Numérique*](#)
- [Interview with Néstor Kohan](#)
- [Europe Solidaire](#) Includes many of his articles in French and English.
- [Michael Löwy](#), a collection of his writings in [International Viewpoint](#)
- [Franz Kafka and Libertarian Socialism](#) by Michael Löwy
- [TrotskyanaNet](#) provides a biographical sketch and a selective bibliography on Michael Löwy.
- [An ecosocialist manifesto by Joel Kovel and Michael Lowy on *Ozleft*](#)
- [Che Guevara: The Spark that does not Die](#) by Michael Löwy, July 1997

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