

# Communalism

## From Its Origins to the Twentieth Century

**Kenneth Rexroth • Edited by Ken Knabb**

Let us not seize power, but doing away with it and return society to an organic community of noncoercive human relations.

In this fascinating survey of communalism, Kenneth Rexroth takes readers from its prehistoric beginnings (the “primitive communism” of hunter-gatherer societies and neolithic villages) through the Essenes and early Christians (who “held all things common”), millenarian revolts and apocalyptic sects (Anabaptists, Hutterites, Brethren of the Free Spirit), the Diggers in the English Revolution, nineteenth-century utopian communities (Oneida, Brook Farm, Fourierists), to the countercultural communes of the 1960s. Based on extensive historical research, Rexroth’s narration is enlivened by anecdotes about the foibles and fantasies of the communalists and worldly-wise comments on the factors that led to their successes and failures.

For this new edition, Ken Knabb has added notes, updates, a bibliography, and a new introduction.

### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

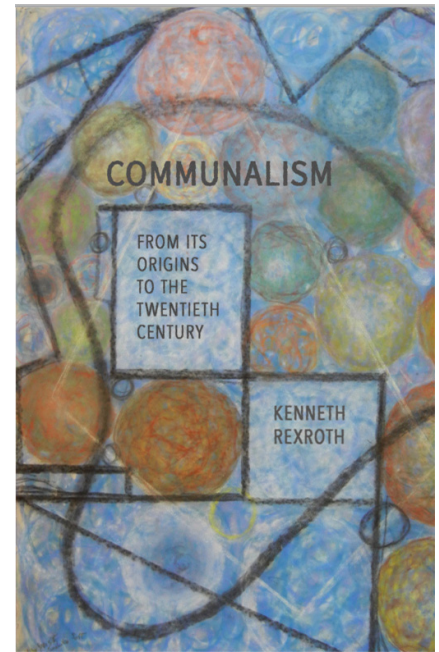
**Kenneth Rexroth** (1905–1982) spent his teenage years in jazz-age Chicago and hitching around the country. In 1927 he moved to San Francisco, where he played a key role in preparing the ground for the political and cultural ferments of the 1950s and 1960s. Author of more than forty volumes of poetry, essays, social criticism, and translations from seven different languages, he wryly described his main themes as “sex, mysticism, and revolution.”

**Ken Knabb** (b. 1945) got to know Rexroth in the 1960s and later wrote a book about him. His other books include *Public Secrets*, *The Joy of Revolution and Related Texts*, and translations of Guy Debord and the Situationist International.

### ACCOLADES

“The well-known poet/translator/critic Kenneth Rexroth has presented a truly impressive potpourri of information about a vast number of eclectic groups, societies, and religious thinkers.... The focus may indeed be communalism—a loose definition which here includes everything from paleolithic hunting communities to Assassins and Franciscans and Knights Templars and transcendental free-lovers on Brook Farm. But there is at least as much history as sociology, not to mention political science, anthropology, and religion. Indeed, there is probably no more cogent recounting of the endless numbers of sects, schisms, heresies, reformers, and mystics whose normally incomprehensible struggles with papal authorities over the arcana of the Eucharist make up the history of the Middle Ages.”

—*Kirkus Review*



### SUBJECT CATEGORY

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