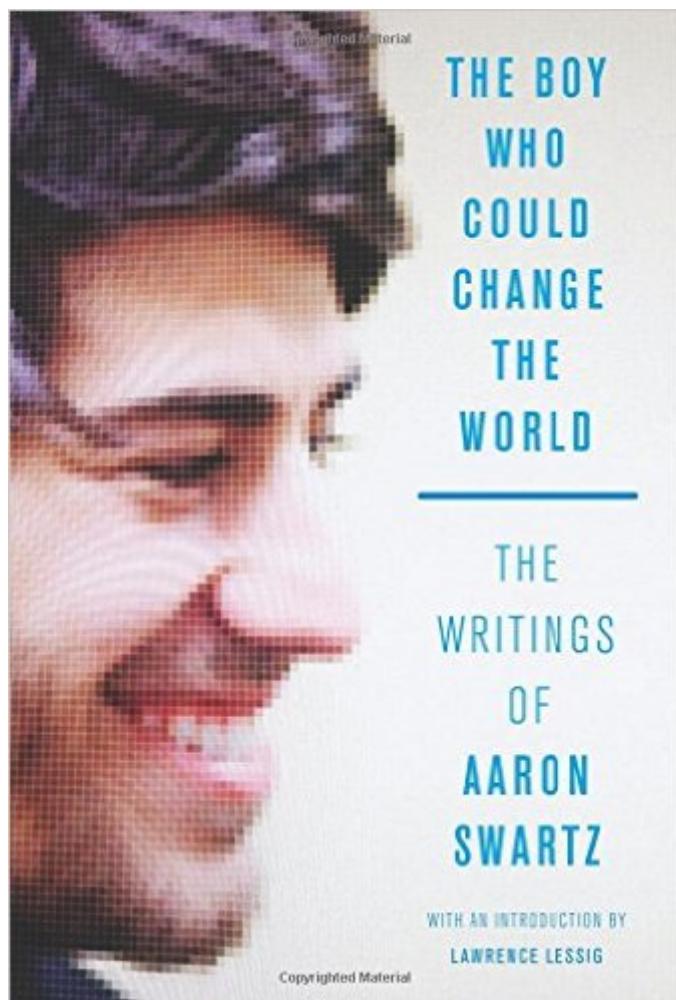


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The Boy Who Could Change The World: The Writings Of Aaron Swartz



Synopsis

In his too-short life, Aaron Swartz reshaped the Internet, questioned our assumptions about intellectual property, and touched all of us in ways that we may not even realize. His tragic suicide in 2013 at the age of twenty-six after being aggressively prosecuted for copyright infringement shocked the nation and the world. Here for the first time in print is revealed the quintessential Aaron Swartz: besides being a technical genius and a passionate activist, he was also an insightful, compelling, and cutting essayist. With a technical understanding of the Internet and of intellectual property law surpassing that of many seasoned professionals, he wrote thoughtfully and humorously about intellectual property, copyright, and the architecture of the Internet. He wrote as well about unexpected topics such as pop culture, politics both electoral and idealistic, dieting, and lifehacking. Including three in-depth and previously unpublished essays about education, governance, and cities, *The Boy Who Could Change the World* contains the lifeâ™s work of one of the most original minds of our time.

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Customer Reviews

In a collection of essays, blog posts and lectures by Aaron Swartz (1986 - 2013) before his untimely death, the IT whizz kid explores the nature of modern politics, education, media, digital piracy, online collaboration, and many more in a book compiled by his friends titled *The Boy Who Could Change The World*. In one of his blog posts Aaron Swartz's explores what happens when a good idea or concept is hijacked by those who wishes to circumvent it. He explains that when an idea like

transparency is pushed against a government (or a corporation) that does not want to be open about its deeds, that government tend to corrupt the process of transparency and empty it of any effectiveness. Aaron uses the United States government, after the famous Watergate saga, as an example. He writes: "... After Watergate, people were upset about politicians receiving millions of dollars from large corporations. But, on the other hand, corporations seem to like paying off politicians. So instead of banning the practice, Congress simply required that politicians keep track of everyone who gives them money and file a report on it for public inspection." ...when you create a regulatory agency, you put together a group of people whose job is to solve some problem. They're given the power to investigate who's breaking the law and the authority to punish them. Transparency, on the other hand, simply shifts the work from the government to the average citizen, who has neither the time nor the ability to investigate these questions in any detail, let alone do anything about it. It's a farce: a way for Congress to look like it has done something on some pressing issue without actually endangering its corporate sponsors.

To say, "The Boy Who Could Change the World" is a fascinating book is an understatement. Aaron Swartz reminds me of my brother Michael. Around 1985 I had a discussion with Michael about the Berlin Wall. Michael said, "you'll see, it'll come down." To which I replied, "Never! You forget, I visited Berlin in 1980, I crossed Checkpoint Charlie. I got poked into my ribs with a Kalashnikov, when I did not move fast enough by East German guards. That Wall won't come down." As it turned out, Michael was right and I was wrong, even though I had been there and seen it. Aaron Swartz's thoughts come from the same idealistic angle. They are challenging our thoughts as we see the world, and what we believe is possible. Sadly, both, Aaron Swartz and my brother are dead. Michael died of MS in 2003. Why do the forward thinkers have to die young and the old establishment stays in place? Swartz' thoughts are provocative (like my brother's), they force us to think about what is and might be possible. When I began reading, right away - I cringed. Aaron Swartz writes, "... Downloading may be illegal. But 60 million used Napster and only million voted for Bush or Gore. We live in a democracy. If the people want to share files then the law should be changed to let them...." Ouch! I write books. What about if "the people" want to download my books for free? Aaron Swartz has an answer for that, "... And there is a fair way to change it. A Harvard professor found that \$60/yr for broadband users would make up for all lost revenue. The government would give it to the affected artists and, in return, make downloading legal, sparking easier-to-use systems and more shared music.

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