I hope more people read this book. I hope people can get past the sometimes-forced dialogue and attempts at humor — which nearly stopped me from reading on, hence my mentioning it upfront — and focus primarily on the very worthwhile message the Arbinger Institute is helping to spread: that the wars we see on the news, are connected to our daily conflicts at home, and that a lasting solution towards peace involves our individual consciences foremost, wherein we humanize those on the other side of an issue, developing genuine curiosity and concern for them.

In my stories, I’ve touched on some of the points that have been systematized in the book by the Arbinger Institute. For example, in ‘Before and after,’ city councilor Jane has an awakening where she no longer feels like running for public office. She gives up on the elections, which to her reduces people to mere numbers. In ‘Drill,’ Juliette faces a truth about her husband, who is assured of his superior understanding of events. And in ‘Jesus’ passion’ from my ‘Gorilla’s daughter’ collection, Father Sonny explains Kris’ conflict with her sister apart from the purported subject of disagreement itself, focusing instead on what the sisters mean to each other.

Because over the past year I’ve gone through some introspective drama myself, much of what was said in ‘The anatomy of peace’ resonated with me.

“I become an agent of change... to the degree that I begin to live to help things go right rather than simply to correct things that are going wrong.”
- Location 370-372 (Amazon Kindle Edition)

Much of change, we’re told in the book, has to do with repositioning ourselves in relation to those we deal with, which also makes the other party more susceptible to what we have to say. This goes hand in hand with our better understanding the points being made against us:

“[I]f we are sure about others’ need to change but are unwilling to let what we learn from them inform changes in us as well, how much change are we likely to invite?”
- Location 2618-2619

“[W]e choose to see others either as people like ourselves or as objects. They either count like we do or they don’t. In the former case, since we regard them as we regard ourselves, we say our hearts are at peace toward them. In the latter case, since we systematically view them as inferior, we say our hearts are
Notes on Arbinger Institute’s ‘The anatomy of peace’

at war.”
- Location 519-521

“[W]e respond to others’ way of being toward us rather than to their behavior. Which is to say that our children respond more to how we’re regarding them than they do to our particular words or actions.”
- Location 618-619

Belittling others, and turning away from what we know to be ‘the right thing to do,’ becomes easier when we feel a strong moralistic justification for it, which eventually blinds us to peaceful resolution, not to mention peace within:

“[W]hen I violate the sensibility I have about others and how I should be toward them, I immediately begin to see the world in ways that justify my self-betrayal.”
- Location 1716-1717

I like how the writers of the Arbinger Institute managed to connect their worldview with entrepreneurship:

“A company that operationalizes seeing others as people sees differently in a way that allows it to achieve a competitive advantage. The gulf between its own performance and its nearest competitors’ cannot be bridged merely by mimicking the company’s behavior... [C]ompetitors have to be willing to see others as people, with all that implies, to cross the chasm. This is why lasting competitive advantage is a function of the how.”
- Location 2842-2847

The Arbinger Institute also provides a lot of great visual tools in the book, to help internalize one’s understanding of these concepts. This is one of the most useful books I’ve read, in terms of getting people to act out the insights contained in it. In its perhaps not-so-small way, the institute has brought the world closer to peace.

For more notes on books I’ve read, visit https://paulspurpose.com/tag/notes/.
Buy ‘The anatomy of peace’ on Amazon, here.
This document is guided by the fair-use doctrine, and is for the purpose of critiquing and educating.
You can write me at paul@paulspurpose.com.