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BOOK REVIEW

A Communications Practitioner Reads Pensamiento Crítico para la Era de la Inteligencia Artificial

A critical review of Rafael Azofeifa's guide to critical thinking for AI-mediated work

A Links Global book review by M. Sanchez, founder of Links Global, a communications firm working at the intersection of trust science, narrative design, and civic engagement. Part of the Links Global article series: Book Reviews. Drawn from 25 years of field practice and evidence-based research in strategic communication, public engagement, and institutional trust.

Disclosure: Rafael Azofeifa is a professional colleague whose work I have followed and supported. This review is offered as an independent critical reading from a communications practitioner's perspective, not as an endorsement or promotional assessment.

In Brief

When producing an answer costs almost nothing, the decisive skill becomes judging whether the answer can be trusted. Rafael Azofeifa's book sets out to teach that skill, in Spanish, for Latin American professionals. This review credits its pedagogical architecture, tests its claim to originality against Kahneman, Sagan, Bergstrom and West, and Caulfield, and states what it has not yet demonstrated.

There is a book that the Latin American professional community has needed for some time, and Rafael Azofeifa has written it.

Pensamiento Crítico para la Era de la Inteligencia Artificial, which Azofeifa shared with me in manuscript ahead of publication, arrives at exactly the moment when the gap between the sophistication of AI tools and the conceptual frameworks most professionals use to evaluate them has become genuinely dangerous. The book's central argument is both simple and important: when producing an answer costs almost nothing, the decisive professional competency shifts from finding the answer to evaluating whether the answer is trustworthy, what it actually means, and what the consequences of acting on it might be. Azofeifa calls this critical thinking. Most people call it judgment. This book is, at its best, a systematic attempt to teach both.

What the Book Does Well

The pedagogical architecture is its strongest achievement. Azofeifa structures the book correctly, from epistemological foundations through cognitive error mechanisms before arriving at applied AI contexts. This sequencing is pedagogically sound and practically important: most AI literacy material jumps directly to applications, producing readers who can navigate specific tools without the conceptual infrastructure to evaluate whether those tools should be trusted. Azofeifa doesn't make that mistake. He insists that readers understand what truth, evidence, and justified belief actually are before they encounter the AI-specific implications of those concepts. This is the right order.

The prefacio earns particular attention. It opens with a sentence that communicators will recognize immediately as precisely crafted: *"Cuando producir una respuesta cuesta poco, la competencia decisiva ya no consiste solamente en encontrarla."* This is not accidental. Azofeifa knows how to write an argument's spine, and this sentence is the book's. Everything that follows is elaboration.

The appendix architecture (twenty-one appendices covering everything from cognitive bias catalogues to deepfake protocols to thirty-day habit formation programs) signals something important about the author's intentions. He is not writing an essay to be read once and shelved. He is writing a professional reference to be used repeatedly, returned to, applied. The calibration diary, the decision templates, the role-specific itineraries: these are the tools of a practitioner who has thought seriously about the gap between knowing something and being able to do something with the knowledge.

From a communications perspective, this distinction matters enormously. The field of communications is full of practitioners who know, in the abstract, the principles of effective communication. The ones who communicate effectively are the ones who have closed the gap between knowing and doing. Azofeifa is attempting to build that closing mechanism into the book's structure. It is an ambitious and admirable attempt.

What the Book Needs

A communications practitioner reading this book will notice two tensions that the author has not yet fully resolved.

The first is the audience tension. The book reaches simultaneously for the general educated reader and for the senior professional: a dual ambition that the structure and depth of the content does not entirely support. The table of contents promises a 300-page epistemological-to-applied text; the prefacio reaches for the generalist reader with the accessibility of its framing. These are not incompatible goals, but they require more deliberate integration than the current draft achieves. A clearer audience specification (in the front matter, in the marketing positioning, and in the stylistic choices throughout) would help both the reader self-select and the author make consistent decisions about density, vocabulary, and assumed prior knowledge.

The second is the register tension. The chapter titles communicate more declarative confidence than the nuanced content inside them will deliver, and should deliver. “Qué significa que algo sea verdadero” sets an expectation of philosophical resolution that the chapter correctly resists. For a book explicitly committed to intellectual humility, calibrated uncertainty, and the honest acknowledgment of what we don’t know, the structural architecture could more fully reflect those commitments. The epistemic modesty that Azofeifa advocates for should be visible not just in disclaimers but in how the book presents itself to the reader.

Measured Against Its Comparators

The claim that this is “the book the field has needed” deserves to be tested against the existing shelf rather than asserted, and on reflection I let that claim stand unexamined the first time through. The epistemics-for-an-age-of-cheap-answers genre is not empty. Carl Sagan’s “baloney detection kit,” Daniel Kahneman’s account of dual-process reasoning in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, and Carl Bergstrom and Jevin West’s *Calling Bullshit* all attempt versions of what Azofeifa attempts here: building the conceptual infrastructure a reader needs before they can evaluate a claim, a source, or now, an AI-generated answer. Mike Caulfield’s SIFT method for lateral reading does, in a shorter and more tactical form, some of what Azofeifa’s Appendix 10 does for AI-produced responses.

Measured against that shelf, Azofeifa’s contribution is not conceptual novelty: the epistemological building blocks of justified belief, cognitive bias, and source evaluation are the same ones Sagan, Kahneman, and Bergstrom and West work with. What is genuinely new is the application layer: a systematic, appendix-driven treatment of AI-specific failure modes (deepfakes, calibration diaries, AI-response evaluation protocols) built on that foundation, in Spanish, for a Latin American professional audience the English-language canon was never written for and does not address. That is a real and defensible claim to originality. It is a narrower claim than “the book the field has needed,” and it is the claim the book has actually earned.

An Unresolved Reservation

One thing did not resolve for me on reading, and I am not going to dress it up as a fixable structural note. Twenty-one appendices is an ambitious apparatus, but ambition of scope is not evidence of efficacy. Nothing in the material I reviewed shows the method actually catching a wrong or misleading AI-generated answer in real time: a worked example of the framework failing to be fooled. Without that demonstration, the appendix architecture reads, to me, as a well-organized inventory of tools whose track record is still unproven, not yet as proof that the “closing mechanism” between knowing and doing actually closes.

The Communications Challenge This Book Faces

From a distribution and positioning perspective, *Pensamiento Crítico* faces a challenge that has less to do with its content quality, which is genuine, and more to do with market positioning.

This is a serious book in a category that the Spanish-language market has not yet learned to distinguish from self-help. The cover, the marketing language, the platform category decisions: all of these will determine whether this book reaches the professional audience that most needs it or gets shelved alongside the motivational content that fills the adjacent space. The distinction between "here is how to feel better about thinking" and "here is the technical infrastructure of rigorous reasoning applied to AI systems" is not self-evident to a browser in a bookstore or a scroller on Amazon. Azofeifa's positioning challenge is making that distinction visible before the reader opens the first page.

The academic and professional communities (universities, corporate learning programs, continuing education institutions, professional associations) are the distribution channels that can receive this book at the level of sophistication it actually represents. A targeted outreach strategy to these channels, positioned explicitly as professional development content rather than general interest reading, would serve the book's actual intellectual ambitions better than general consumer marketing.

Who Should Read This Book

Every Latin American and Caribbean professional navigating AI tools in their work (which, at this point, means nearly everyone in any knowledge-work role) should engage with this book, or at minimum with its most directly applicable sections. The Appendix 10 alone (a guide for evaluating AI-produced responses) is worth the price of the book for any professional who uses AI tools in their practice.

Communications practitioners specifically will find Parts II and III, on the errors of human thinking and on knowledge in AI-mediated environments, directly applicable to their work. The chapters on desinformación, propaganda, and persuasion (Chapter 16), on sources and trust (Chapter 14), and on organizational critical thinking (Chapter 20) address terrain that communications professionals navigate daily and that most communications curricula address inadequately.

This is not the first book to teach critical thinking for an age of cheap answers, but on the evidence here, it is the first to do so systematically, in Spanish, built specifically around the failure modes of AI-mediated work, for a Latin American professional audience the English-language canon was not written for. That narrower claim is the one this book has actually earned, and it remains a significant contribution, not just in content but in the signal it sends about where serious intellectual work in this domain is being produced.

Where This Fits

The judgment this book tries to teach is the subject of Critical Thinking in the Age of AI and AI Literacy Is Not What You Think It Is. For the trust side of the same question, see Trust Literacy.

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