

Behind the Scenes at C-MA Empresarial 2026: A Case Study of Heart Intelligence in Coherence

By Cheche — Luis Felipe Avella Villegas



I arrived unguarded. I needed a meditative rest before stepping onto the stage of C-MA Empresarial 2026 at the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce — a strategic gathering designed for CEOs, CFOs, CHROs, and organizational leaders from across Latin America. I found the speakers' lounge nearly empty, an armchair available, and the silence I was looking for.

What I did not expect was that the only other person in the room would be Tal Ben-Shahar himself — the professor who leads the happiness studies field shaped at Harvard University, and who had opened the event that morning before nearly 1,000 leaders with a talk on positive leadership and the science of happiness, drawing on the positive psychology of Martin Seligman and company.

We introduced ourselves. And something in that shared silence told me there was time and real presence for a conversation.

I told him a story I have carried since 2006.

Around that time, I had co-authored the book *Logros y Desafíos de la Responsabilidad Social en Colombia (Achievements and Challenges of Social Responsibility in Colombia)* with Professor Roberto Gutiérrez — my mentor in social entrepreneurship at Universidad de los Andes. We had just come out of an Ashoka event where outstanding social entrepreneurs shared their testimonies. One of them was Silvio — leader of hundreds of waste pickers in Bogotá — who told us that whenever his ego started to swell, he would make a radical decision: he would leave behind the car, the cell phone, and the fine clothes, put his old working outfit back on, and return to his original calling as a nomadic recycler for an entire week. Long walks with his wooden cart on ball-bearing wheels through the streets of Bogotá, a recycler at heart, grateful for the humility he recharged through that noble trade.

On the small bus back from southern Bogotá to Universidad de los Andes, luck sat me next to James Austin — senior professor at Harvard, lifelong devotee of the case method and leader, with the support of Roberto Gutiérrez, of the Social Enterprise Knowledge Network (SEKN) in Latin America. A man whose academic life had been precisely about systematizing the knowledge that others generated by living it.

And without any preamble, I let it out:

—James, are you aware that these social entrepreneurs — like Silvio — are the ones who generate, through their full attention and action in the present, the social innovation we write our cases about? Do you realize they will never read those cases, and yet they, and others who will come after them, will keep generating the seed of the knowledge we systematize to teach others about social entrepreneurship? What is that inner something that allows them to produce such natural knowledge? Perhaps that answer matters more to the world than the outcome of our cases.

The master of the case method — the man who had devoted his life to capturing the living knowledge of others — looked at me with some discomfort before answering with evasive intelligence.

That question never left me.

Tal listened to the story attentively and told me, with the same calm with which he had been keeping silence: *James was my professor.*

We smiled. With that fine icebreaker of a coincidence behind us, I realized there was time and real presence to go further.

I had spent seven years, full time, reflecting on, practicing, and verifying an inner perspective of sustainable happiness rooted in coherent leadership of our physiology — starting from perfect, coherent, conscious breathing within the framework of neurocardiology — as a contribution toward a society of consciousness. But I had a pending debt with Gerardito. It

seemed only fair that Harvard should come to know him through Tal Ben-Shahar. After all, Gerardito had been fundamental to my new path toward sustainable happiness.

Tal's morning conference was still fresh in my mind, and so was the weight he had given to acceptance in its first part. Then, like an arrow, it landed in my heart-brain: Aceptología — the science of acceptance proposed by a homegrown mystic from the town of Tabio — Gerardo Schmedling — little recognized in Colombia, yet with a silent reach that travels far beyond what any algorithm could trace.

Before revealing the name, I took him on a good walk around that possibility: accepting one's own autobiography through understanding — that is, love — and through trust — that is, faith or spirituality, whichever fits. I told him that in the midst of my bankruptcy as co-founder of an award-winning international company, after nine years as its CEO, Aceptología had helped me recover enough vital energy and resilience to keep moving forward — and that along that path I arrived, by good fortune, at the horse herd: my therapists and initiatory masters of coherence and consciousness.

I knew I had touched his researcher's enthusiasm. So I gave him the name of the author who seemed to know the laws of the universe the way one knows a tree that has grown beside them all their life: Gerardo Schmedling. And first I clarified that he was a self-taught man who as a child had suffered Guillain-Barré syndrome and could not attend school, and who had learned to read with the help of his cousin.

I also told him about Gonzalo Rodríguez Freyle — a lawyer with the highest national score of his graduating class in Spain, gifted with a prodigious memory, a Harvard MBA graduate, and a leader of the first family offices serving wealthy Spanish families in the United States — who had walked away from a millionaire career, sold his companies, and spent a decade searching for spiritual teachers to overcome an inner emptiness, until he finally found Gerardito's body of knowledge. And that his Foundation for the Development of Consciousness in Spain, and the Master's program in Consciousness and Being — with excellent professors — to which I was granted a scholarship by its director, revolved around the teachings of Gerardito's School of the Magic of Love.

Tal asked me: an academic master's? I shook my head.

Then he took out his phone and asked me whether there was anything about Gerardito in English. I told him I wasn't sure, but that I would gladly find out. He, however, had already found something on Google:

"Aceptology is a philosophical and psychological framework created by Colombian humanist Gerardo Schmedling..."

At that moment, Thomas Eckschmidt joined us — engineer, entrepreneur, and accomplice in a shared vision we had discussed before: a model cell, replicable millions of times, of 100 hectares for 20 self-sufficient families, on my farm La Lucía in the Eastern Plains of Colombia — near Puerto López, Meta — as a "Full Life Insurance" designed for an era that can no longer remain the same.

From one moment to the next, with Tal and Thomas, the topic leapt to humanity's current inflection point with artificial intelligence and the only way through: returning to nature and to simplicity.

That was when Tal said, in a low voice, something that marked me forever:

"I am at peace. I could die at peace. But not for my children. For them, I don't have an answer. Neither does Harvard."

We were called to lunch.

My seatmate at lunch was the Chilean Ronald Sistek — a speaker at the event, who applies complex systems thinking, drawing on nature's patterns and models, to the realities and possibilities of organizations.

As our conversation unfolded, I began to sense in him something I did not expect: the presence, the energy, and the vocabulary of a figure very dear to me. The Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana — nominated for the Nobel Prize for his concept of Autopoiesis alongside Francisco Varela. Maturana was called "my teacher" by the Dalai Lama, and he was key to my own models of fair and sustainable trade chains. I had come to know his work mainly through the social leader Mario Bonilla of Agrosolidaria, who studied him in depth and translated him into the language of farming communities with extraordinary fidelity.

When I mentioned this intuition to Ronald — that something in him reminded me of Maturana — he revealed that Maturana had been his teacher and mentor. And that Humberto Maturana's last podcast, at age 92, days before his death, was with him.

I fell silent for a moment. Grateful for the magic of it.

Unfortunately, that afternoon, right after my conference, I was invited to an interview at the Chamber's radio station and missed the chance to hear Ronald speak. But life is curious — and the conversations that matter always find their moment. After my conference, there in the front row was Juliette — a luminous friend, with a career as an international consultant in global firms, who had taken a brave leap: she left that trajectory to lead herself from her being, inspired by the teachings of Gerardo Schmedling. Her presence, with that smile of someone who has already found her path, was a silent gift throughout my hour on stage.

The next day, at the speakers' lunch of the second day, my seatmate was Jorge Rosas — a Mexican speaker and brilliant communicator who had achieved something few manage on a stage: making us laugh and cry, three times each, interwoven throughout his conference on Happiness Unlocked. I leaned over and whispered to him his own question, the one he had repeated throughout his talk: *And how do you do it?* A man with contagious energy and an emotional intelligence you could feel before he even opened his mouth.

We exchanged visions on artificial intelligence and its impact on society, and found an immediate chemistry. The conversation turned toward what we both felt to be the only real path: a reverse migration — from the outside in, from the city to nature, from a society of consumption toward a society of consciousness.

"I'm taking you to Mexico," he told me.

At that same table I met Mario Plata — former director of the association of human resources directors — and Carolina Astaiza, its new director. Conversations that opened doors to organizations already searching for exactly what ENTRÉNATE has to offer.

With Jorge, the conversation stretched half an hour past lunch. There are people with whom time behaves differently.

At the close of the event, the Chamber had offered me a stand for my books — and there I stayed, sharing with lovely visitors, open and affectionate souls who came for books, dedications, and photos. Those moments that appear on no agenda and are, perhaps, the truest of any event.

That day, Juliette once again became my guardian angel: she drove me home with the boxes of books, and the conversation we wove along the way — about Ronald Sistek, about La Lucía and its model of a self-sufficient cell as a "Full Life Insurance" — kept blossoming naturally.

And she also told me that, that very weekend, she had designed a course framing Gerardo Schmedling's teachings on prosperity combined with her years of international consulting — the GA Method — and she invited me. I went. I learned a great deal. And I confirmed, with more clarity than ever, the architecture of the path I was building to bring physiological coherence to everyone who needs to train it.

Thanks to the living, unspoken gatherings of that event — with Tal, Ronald, Jorge, Thomas, Juliette, everyone else, and the permanent echoes of Gerardo and Humberto — I confirm the fundamental relevance of anchoring, as the one indispensable atomic habit, the nuclear power of physiological coherence that lives in our conscious breathing as a present-moment meditation.

There, intuition emerges — the intelligence of the heart — which needs no filter from artificial intelligence, even as we may put AI to good use as a catalyst of our consciousness, moving forward with heart and brain toward a better possible world.

As I said at the beginning of this story, in 2006 I asked James Austin — master of the case method at Harvard, a man who devoted his life to systematizing the knowledge that others generated by living it — what lay behind the protagonists of his cases. What was that inner something that allowed them to produce natural knowledge without ever needing to read it in any book or Harvard teaching case.

Nineteen years later, this article is my answer.

It is a personalized case study of the intelligence of the heart in coherence. And the only way to learn it is not by reading it — it is by training it.

If you have read this far and something in you resonated, this is the natural path.




The first step is the **Experiential Conference ENTRÉNATE: The Nuclear Power of Physiological Coherence** — the same one I presented at C-MA Empresarial 2026 — adapted to the reality, the language, and the specific challenges of your organization. In an experience of one to three hours, your leaders and teams don't hear about coherence: they

live it, breathe it, and measure it in real time with the HeartMath Institute® Global Coherence App. And each organization receives physical copies of my book *ENTRÉNATE: Respiramos Felicidad Sostenible*, so that every participant can continue their training independently, guided by the book, its exercises, and their Sustainable Happiness Logbook.

And for everyone who wants to go deeper — because the transformation that begins in the leader must be able to reach everyone the leader leads — this August comes the **ENTRÉNATE PARA SIEMPRE Course** on Hotmart: lifetime access, a global coherence community, and a monthly podcast with the horse herd and experts in medicine, strategy, and human resources.

When a leader transforms from within, thousands feel it. When those thousands train, the world changes — and the Global Coherence Initiative leaps from hypothesis to proof, raising the level of consciousness of humanity.

The first step is a 20-minute pertinence conversation, free of charge and with no sales agenda, to define your organization's moment.

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