The Indispensable Role of the "Disagreeable" Human Touch

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We often think the "human touch" in education means being kind, soft, or agreeable. But as AI begins to offer us a world of perfectly polite, pleasing, and politically correct answers, we risk losing something vital: the touch of honest disagreement. While an algorithm is an agreeable assistant, it lacks the professional courage to tell us when we are wrong or when something will not work. Although the human touch beyond algorithms may not be always soft or empathic, we still must embrace the "disagreeable giver", the colleague who is often challenging, but deeply committed to their profession and our students' success. This talk explores how disagreements and critical frictions may actually be an act of care. We see it in curriculum renewal processes, where disagreeable colleagues point out unrealistic expectations. We also see it in curriculum implementation, where they demand a level of rigour in materials, tests, and alignment. And, we see it in test development, where teachers, as human examiners, are still the backbone of the assessment procedures. Thus, this talk aims to embrace the "prickly" colleague, since in a world of agreeable algorithms, the most authentic service we can offer may be the courage to be difficult for the sake of our students' growth.