

# ‘Het einde van de geesteswetenschappen 1.0’ – ‘The End of the Humanities 1.0’

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On 14th December 2012 Rens Bod delivered his inaugural address as Professor of Computational and Digital Humanities at the University of Amsterdam. Under the ominous title *Het einde van de geesteswetenschappen 1.0* [*The End of the Humanities 1.0*], the lecture provided a spirited agenda for the future of the arts and humanities. More specifically, Bod predicts that digitisation will generate a paradigm shift in the next couple of years, enabling scholars, among other things, to identify universal patterns in the field of the arts, history and literature. Reviewing the digital revolution of our age, Bod also asserts that a focus on ‘big data’ will close the current gap between the humanities and the exact sciences and increase the societal relevance of the former. In short, he envisages a golden age of ‘valorisation’ of research in the humanities. Finally, Bod argues that the rise of digital humanities should coincide with critical and theoretical reflection on its methods, assumptions and possibilities.

*The End of the Humanities 1.0* offers an attractively straightforward and upbeat programme, but it also prompts some larger questions. Some scholars will be puzzled by Bod’s reading of the history of the humanities; some will question his hermeneutical approach and yet others will criticise the tendency to reduce the arts to a collective search for big data. The few concrete examples that Bod provided of truly successful business collaborations raise questions about the potential of valorisation. This Forum of the *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* seeks to facilitate a discussion about Rens Bod’s ideas from the perspective of current historical science in the Netherlands and Belgium. For this purpose the editors have asked three historians with expertise in digital humanities – Inger Leemans, Andreas Fickers and Marnix Beyen – to engage with Bod’s agenda from their respective cultural, political and media historical

perspective. Rens Bod has kindly agreed to respond to their observations. The editors are grateful to all participants in this Forum and hope it will further fruitful discussion about the (digital) future of historical scholarship.

On behalf of the Editorial Board,

GEERT JANSSEN AND KAAT WILS