Abstract

The dissertation sets out to define and describe the nature of trust and risks in relation to computers becoming ubiquitous. Drawing on the theories of risk society developed by Beck, Lash, Van Loon and others, the dissertation argues that the risks of the computer becoming ubiquitous can be seen as ascribable to cultural representations in the narrative, aesthetic registers - risk and risk experience takes place as stories and mythologies rather than as a result of calculation or as an actuarial perspective on a probabilistic future. Thus risk *culture* better describes a situation where "technological" concerns, anxiety, paranoia, and panics are prevalent. The thesis argues that conventional approaches to order risks are constantly failing, and that they persistently overlook emotional, aesthetic judgment that originates in risk culture. However much we attempt to secure, there are always "excess" risks. Building from this perspective, the thesis argues that it might be valuable to refigure the concept we use to describe trust *in* computers towards a notion of trust *within* computers. Trust *within* suggests that the concerns that users bring into their interaction with technology are valuable, and that failing to recognize this can challenge a trust in the self that is essential to existential trust and the ability to existentially dwell within a technological culture. As a supplement to the conventional understanding of tool transparency as a governing principle for the design of successful interactions with computers, the thesis proposes that we can refocus the design of interactions with computers towards *reflective designs* that emphasize the users' active engagement and interpretation. Reflective designs are presented as ways to mirror bodily, narrative, emotional and affective perspectives on uncertainty, fear or distrust that are also part of living in a world that is increasingly pervaded by computers. Such a perspective seeks to preserve a certain amount of user agency in defining and understanding the cultural embeddedness of technologies and the ways in which the self is involved in technology.