Susan Petrilli, *Signs, Language and Listening: Semioethics Perspectives*. Ottawa, Legas, 2018. 224 pp., \$66.37 (pb). ISBN 978-1-897493-67-0

Signs, Language and Listening aims to introduce a new perspective in semiotics: global semioethics. In her new book Susan Petrilli lists a massive repository of documents by authors that include Sebeok, Morris, Welby, Rossi-Landi, Bakhtin, Ponzio, and so on. Drawing on her long career of scholarship, this encyclopedic work thus familiarizes readers with the development of semiotics, its main branches and particular historical events, its future trajectory, and moreover, the new theme of semioethics, a neologism she coined in the early 1980s.

Petrilli's narrative unfolds around three core themes: semiotics as semioethics; philosophy of language as the art of listening; prolegomena for linguistics as part of the science of signs or semiotics (p. 13). Petrilli explicitly states her purpose throughout the first chapter, deepens it through the second to seventh chapters, and presents her central points from the linguistic angle in the eighth chapter.

In the first chapter Petrilli states the origin and connotation of semiotics as semioethics, and proposes ten theses to explain the future of semiotics: (1) a general theory of signs must avoid glottocentrism, which takes the verbal sign as its general sign model and the linguistics of verbal sign systems as its model science; (2) a general sign model cannot be constructed on the basis of the verbal sign; (3) listening is an interpretant of responsive understanding, a disposition for the welcome and hospitable in the house of semiotics, towards signs that are other, signs of otherness; (4) semiotics must extend towards the global; (5) semiotics as a science must be conscious of its very conditions of possibility and deal with the problem of its functions; (6) language syntactics tells of the metaoperative capacity specific to human beings; (7) semiotics is connected with responsibility; (8) semiotics is a critical science in the sense of both Kant and Marx; (9) as global semiotics, metasemiotics, and critical semiotics (in the double sense suggested, twice subject to responsibility), semiotics must be concerned with life of the planet as well as with pragmatic concerns about well-being and health; (10) this programme outlines a special approach to semiotics as practised by the Bari-Leece School and designated as semioethics (pp. 19–23).

Petrilli's ten theses not only define the future shape of semiotics but also depict the vocation of semioethics. The best way to realize this future is to listen to others, and the author emphasizes otherness. From this central purpose, Petrilli develops her second core theme, defining semioethics as 'the art of listening', 'the art of caring', and the 'semiotics of otherness' (p. 25).

In the third chapter Petrilli introduces communication between nature and culture based on her aforementioned strategy of listening. From the fourth to the sixth chapter, she moves to the necessity, pragmatic-ethical dimension, and communication aspects of semioethics. She believes that 'semioethics intends to evidence the responsibility of semiotics towards semiosis' (p. 54).

In the same chapter, Petrilli expands her discussion on global communication: 'listening is decisive for global semiotics, for the capacity to tune into and synchronize with the semiotic universe' (p. 76). According to Petrilli, 'listening is necessary for a critical discussion of separatism and of the different trends that tend to exchange the part for the whole, whether by mistake or in bad faith, as in the case of exasperated individualism in social and cultural life' (p. 77). She thus offers a clear understanding of the necessity of listening in semioethics.

To reveal the pragmatic-ethical dimension, Petrilli defines in the fifth chapter the 'meaning of meaning' as the 'strictly connected with the notion of semiosis' (p. 81). She adopts the meaning and nature of 'significs' put forward by Welby, 'the study of the nature of significance in all its forms and relations, and thus of its working in every possible sphere of human interest and purpose' (p. 86).

In the next chapter Petrilli focuses on aspects of communication: utterance, text, interpretation, implicit and explicit meaning, sense, significance, ambiguity. In her eyes, 'insofar as it is associated to the utterance and to the text, the word is turned to the other and calls for listening' (p. 121). It can be considered the precondition for listening. Moreover, 'the text as an utterance is a unique and unrepeatable event and as such calls for the interpretant of answering comprehension' (p. 124). Thus we may know that every utterance needs a responsive and responsible response after listening.

In the seventh chapter Petrilli observes the pivotal role of listening and responsive understanding in language and communication directly. She points out that 'in human communication, the problem of the other is essentially the problem of the word, that is, of the word as voice recognized as the quest for listening' (p. 139). As to the working circumstance of a word, she believes 'there is always a process of refraction in a word, for the word is always mediated by the relation to others, which is a relation of both the cognitive and emotional orders' (p. 139). Furthermore, 'listening is a *constitutive element of the word*, it derives from the nature of the word, which always calls for listening, demands it' (p. 140).

After reading the preceding seven chapters, it is easier for us to understand the connotation and purpose of semioethics, and the vital role played by

listening during this semiosis. In the eighth chapter Petrilli explains the third theme, 'prolegomena for linguistics as part of the science of signs or semiotics'. Her focus is mainly on the Bakhtinian revolution, even invoking an analogy to the 'Copernican revolution'. We are given to understand that otherness, dialogism, the humanism of the other, and responsibility are the key points most closely related to semioethics and listening. Petrilli comments that 'Bakhtin's philosophy is philosophy pervaded by studies on the sign insofar as it is based on listening' (p. 158). As to the logic of Bakhtin's dialogism, Petrilli states, 'Bakhtin's critique of dialogic reason is developed on the basis of the logic of otherness' (p. 163). She thinks that 'dialogism is present in one's own point of view, in one's own system of values, in one's own thoughts, voice, etc' (p. 165).

We may by now have a comprehensive view of the general opinions of this book: semioethics is derived from global semiotics, which aims to care for the human and cure the current unhealthy world by one major channel – listening to the other. The power driving Petrilli to finish such a splendid book is to arouse the readers' awareness of listening and caring for the other. In other words, pay attention to the others, listen to the other, take the other into the heart and consider the other when we encounter the other, chat with the other, and communicate with the other. That *is* otherness. Moreover, the otherness here can be understood as the love and sympathy we feel for others, except ourselves.

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