■ *Susan Gal*
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Language Ideologies Compared: Metaphors of Public/Private

The cultural distinction of public/private is as crucial to capitalism as to liberal politics, as significant in everyday life as in social theory. Analyzing it as a language ideology of differentiation clarifies how it creates separations between contrasting icons of linguistic genres, places, persons, and moralities. Ethnographic and textual materials from the United States are juxtaposed with evidence from Eastern European state socialism, providing a general method for comparing language ideologies. Semiotic properties of fractal recursion and erasure are evident in both cases, yet with telling differences in the metaphors through which the distinction is abstracted from interaction, anchored, and further extended. [language ideology, metaphor, fractal recursion, erasure, Eastern Europe]

Introduction

Professional analysis and everyday talk both rely on culturally resonant metaphors to characterize the differences between forms of speech. In the sociolinguistic literature, the most familiar metaphors have been "high" and "low," or "formal" and "informal." Such labels have often been borrowed from the metapragmatic discourse of the groups whose linguistic practices were being described. The terms were conscripted into service as the analytic categories of professional observers. This is a particular—and widespread—kind of interdiscursivity, familiar to the social sciences. My aim is to focus on some of the semiotic processes that create the similarities on which interdiscursivity relies. The cultural characterizations examined here are *public* and *private.* These are common in folk theories as well as professional models of culture and society in the United States. The opposition of public/private is invariably implicated in language ideologies—practices and discourses that are socially positioned and partial engagements with, as well as pictures of, a sociolinguistic world. Yet in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, public and private have only rarely been objects of investigation.[1]

My curiosity about the public/private opposition was aroused during fieldwork in Communist-era Eastern Europe (pre-1989), where its use in everyday interaction was both familiar and oddly off-kilter. For instance, Polish women in a gynecological clinic were not surprised to find doors left open during pelvic exams and medical histories collected in easy earshot of other patients. Privacy was a relevant category for them, and its practice much valued. But they did not expect to find it in a state clinic staffed with state employees (Wedel 1986:25–26). Despite a parallel valuation of privacy in the United States, the contrast with American middle-class expectations of gynecological

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exams could not be more stark. This similarity-in-difference makes a comparison especially revealing.

Public and private are not only categories in everyday talk about social life, for they are crucial in political philosophy and polemical issues in debates about the differences between the two "sides" in the Cold War. Historically, the distinction has been foundational for Western political and economic theory. It was as important in antiquity as in 18th- to 19th-century republican and liberal thought, as crucial in early justifications of capitalism as in recent neoliberal philosophies. Because of this dichotomy's centrality to liberal capitalism, it has been a favorite target for critics of such systems, especially feminist and Communist theorists of the 19th century. Eastern European Communist parties in the 20th century attempted to subvert capitalist society through active social engineering around this distinction. The parties focused on the elimination of private property and the socialization of housework. The distinction remains at the center of post-Socialist policy debates as Eastern Europeans struggle with the privatization of government services and of formerly socialized industry and as they watch parallel processes of government privatization in the recent neoliberal phase of Western capitalism.

In an earlier essay, I argued for a semiotic approach to the many and apparently contradictory uses of the public/private distinction in social theory and everyday life, proposing to treat the distinction as a language ideology (Gal 2002). The justification for this strategy lies in the view that language ideologies are never only about language. They posit close relations between linguistic practices and other social activities and have semiotic properties that provide insights into the workings of ideologies more generally.[2] Because the ideology of public/private divides spaces, moralities, types of people, activities, and linguistic practices into opposed categories, it was useful to consider it a language ideology of *differentiation* (Gal and Irvine 1995; Irvine and Gal 2000).

This article extends that earlier argument and then turns the analytic strategy around to suggest that a juxtaposition of the public/private distinction as it plays out in two related yet different social formations can illuminate the study of language ideologies in two ways. First, such comparison highlights the emergence of culturally resonant metaphors out of the reflexive details of everyday talk. This is a circulatory or feedback process: the interactional *effect* of publicness or privateness is created through contrasting interactional practices that are themselves interpreted through a language ideology that formulates (presupposes) the values and cultural images identified as characteristic—emblematic, iconic—of public and private. Ideological assumptions select and identify what will count as public or private across events and interactions; similarity is never inherent in the objects classified (Goodman 1972). Different linguistic ideologies pick out as public or private different aspects of the many indexical signs that appear in real-time interaction. The features of the interaction that signal such values (within some ideology) are colligated into registers or genres that are projected as iconic of the ideological distinction. Labeling of linguistic forms as "public" or "private" is a further metadiscursive step, one that allows the distinction to be more easily discussed and extended to other cultural "objects" and enacted in crucial, often ritual, events.[3]

Second, by analyzing the metaphors for public and private that are characteristic of two different but related ideological regimes, we can track the way metaphors *anchor* the semiotic process of differentiation. U.S. notions of public/private are most often grasped through metaphors of space: spheres, realms, and places. By contrast, in Communist-era Eastern Europe, notions of public and private were understood primarily as distinctions among different kinds of people. This is not to say that Americans never recognize public versus private people or that Eastern Europeans never organized public and private spaces. Indeed, as Irvine and I (2000) have suggested, distinctions between spaces are often projected onto categories of people, and distinctions between people onto spaces, as a vital part of differentiation. This is why

the concept of *anchoring* is needed. It captures the fact that in one case it is space that is taken for granted as the "literal," "real," and stable locus of the distinction from which other uses of the contrast are understood to be derived, whereas in the other the archetypal example of the public/private distinction is imagined as contrasting social groups, with other uses being "merely" analogies. The two ideological regimes are closely related historically, their categories often conflated by analysts. The notion of *anchoring* explains how the similarity is both real and deeply deceptive. It reveals a further aspect of ideologies of differentiation.

In the first part of the article, I analyze the American public/private distinction as a language ideology of differentiation by illustrating its circulation across different communicative genres, including philosophical and social-scientific writings.[4] The section ends with a discussion of spatial metaphors and their implications. In the second part, I juxtapose Eastern European and U.S. practices, suggest how different metaphors are abstracted out of what seem like similar interactional forms, and outline the effect of anchoring as a feature of language ideologies. A single, multifaceted semiotic process, working on different cultural materials, produces different effects. In each case, but in contrasting ways, the semiotic form of the public/private distinction is politically consequential: it disguises power relations, evokes characteristic anxieties, and sometimes shapes novel political imaginings.

Public and Private as Language Ideology

It is hardly news that the public/private dichotomy is ideological, that its application and invocation are interest-laden and positioned. An American version of the dichotomy dating from the 19th century was the doctrine of "separate spheres." It held that the social world is organized around contrasting and incompatible moral principles: public versus private was aligned with community versus individual, male versus female, work versus home, rationality versus sentiment, money versus love, and disinterested group welfare versus self-interest (Landes 1998). It is less widely acknowledged that the dichotomy was a matter of communicative form since its earliest modern use. Kant considered the public to be a special genre of speech, "the communication of rational beings . . . whose writings speak to . . . the world" and who criticize each other and the state (Warner 2002:48). Habermas (1989: chap. 2) traced the bourgeois public sphere to an intersubjective communicative process of debate and writing in 17th- and early-18th-century England and France. The ideal public discourse was anonymous and impersonal and was therefore taken to be impartial. These qualities were supposed to guarantee that reason and not the speaker's social position would be the means of persuasion among interactants. Rational debate, ideally open to anyone with reason, could then be invoked to guarantee the legitimacy of democratic process. The private was similarly defined by talk and writing. It was the emotional-interactional matrix where individuals were formed. This was described in early novels as a sphere of intimate and interested sentimentality (Calhoun 1992:10). To consider the distinction as a *language* ideology is thus quite in keeping with its intellectual history.

There is evidence that this communicatively based opposition between public and private has been tenacious over time. In Woolard's (1989) analysis of a California debate on bilingual ballots in the 1980s, monolingual English speakers tolerated the use of Spanish by Spanish-English bilinguals when it was spoken at home. But even liberal voters sympathetic to Spanish-bilingual minorities voted against a bilingual ballot. From the perspective of English monolinguals, Spanish seemed opaque and exclusionary, thus partisan. It was also seen as a language of home and family. By the logic of the dichotomies just discussed, a language so defined would be considered politically untrustworthy, a vehicle of interestedness and emotion. It would therefore preclude the impartial reason supposedly necessary for politics and thus for voting. As Hill (2001) points out, following Warner (1990), this is consonant not only with the older European notions traced by Habermas but also

with the related U.S. tradition that pits a "presumption of innocence" in public discourse against a "presumption of interest" in private discourse.

Hill outlines four dimensions that frame an interaction as public or private in U.S. folk theory: the *space* in which the talk occurs (e.g., classroom vs. domestic establishment), the *topics and themes* involved (e.g., "wife beating" vs. "domestic violence"), the *speaker* (e.g., unimportant individual vs. officeholder or celebrity), and the *style* of speech (e.g., keyed as emotional vs. serious). These are related: "Light talk and joking are prototypically private, associated with places of intimacy and they are prototypically vernacular, associated with persons of a type whose talk would be unlikely to have public significance" (2001:92). There is a corresponding prototype for public, Hill argues, in which contrasting features of space, style, person, and theme are similarly linked.

In folk theory, public and private are most often presented as mutually exclusive cultural categories. Yet empirical research in the United States undermines the claim of separation between spheres. One problem is that in practice the constitutive distinctions do not line up neatly. For example, Hill demonstrates that spaces considered to be public (e.g., classrooms) are likely to host discussions based on "personal experience," which is not an entirely public genre; similarly, emotional, vernacular style is common even among newspaper commentators who are celebrities and write on national issues. Moving outside of linguistic examples, there is much sociological evidence that monetary transactions of various kinds (public) are common in intimate interactions (private); supposedly private institutions such as families often operate, like the polity—which is the archetype of a public institution—through conflict, power hierarchies, and violence (see Zelizer 2003; Folbre 1994). Conversely, it is a truism that political acts conventionally categorized as public are frequently shaped not by reason but by sentiment. Yet, the normative distinction persists: like any good ideology, it is impervious to counterevidence.

A related problem has been the supposed slipperiness of the terms themselves. Critics have claimed that many of the most respected writings about the distinction are incoherent or contradictory, because theorists are inconsistent in the use of the categories. What is considered public at one point in a theoretical argument is considered private at another point. Note that this is characteristic of commonsense usage as well. For example, "private property" is a defining feature of a capitalist economy, but in capitalist systems participants also call "private" those intimate relationships that are ideally protected from economic calculation. It is at best a partial solution to suggest a continuum in which "some publics are more public than others" (Warner 2002:45). In a recent compendium of definitions, Warner throws up his hands, writing that "most things are private in one sense, public in another" (2002:30). This insight, though telling, fails to provide an analysis of the phenomenon.

The supposed incoherencies and inconsistencies of theoretical writings and ordinary practices are clarified if we approach the public/private distinction as an ideology of *differentiation.* Judith Irvine and I have identified a tripartite semiotic process by which—we argue—language ideologies of differentiation operate. One key aspect of ideologies of differentiation is that they pick out qualities supposedly shared by the social image (in this case, aspects of the categories of persons, themes, spaces, and moral attributes) and the linguistic image (in this case, aspects of style and interaction) and bind them together in a linkage that appears from the perspective of the ideology to be inherent and particularly apt. Hill's prototypes of public and private in U.S. folk theory provide an example of such combinations, although further evidence is needed to show how the linkage can be interpreted as iconic.[5] For the moment, I set aside this aspect of differentiation in order to focus here on the two other parts of the semiotic process: *fractal recursivity* and *erasure.*

"Fractal recursions involve the projection of an opposition, salient at one level of relationship onto some other level" (Irvine and Gal 2000:38). To be fractal, a distinction must be co-constitutive, so that the terms—like *right* and *left* or *east* and *west*—

define each other. Such co-constitutive contrasts can be used to organize virtually any kind of social fact: spaces, institutions, bodies, groups, activities, interactions, and relations. Furthermore, whatever the local, historically specific cultural prototypes or images that motivate oppositions like public and private, the distinction can be reproduced repeatedly by projecting it onto narrower and broader comparisons. This always involves a change in perspective by those making the comparison. Fractal recursions are repetitions of the same contrast but at different scales. Because of this fractal property-a reiterative version of Peirce's diagrammatic iconicity-in any public/private contrast one can always focus on only one "side" and make the same distinction within it. There can always be a public imagined or projected to exist within any private, and privates can be nested inside publics. With each recursion, one changes the perspective of the viewer/interpreter and hence the scope of comparison. What was public in one comparative context can be seen as private in another. The exact significance of the distinctions does not stay identical; there are subtle changes in the meanings of the contrast at each recursion.

Consider the sorts of interactions and activities conventionally allocated to the spaces in a bourgeois house. Apropos here is Habermas's discussion of the "salon" as a crucial step in the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere. He summarizes: "The line between public and private sphere extended right through the home...privatized individuals stepped out of the intimacy of their living rooms into the public sphere of the salon" (1989:45). But Habermas's imagery of a single line does not do justice to his own description of the phenomenon. Rather, from one perspective the major division of public and private is between the house and the street (who can come in, for what kind of activity); however, if we take a closer perspective, looking only at the house itself, the public/private division can once again be applied. Focusing only on the rooms inside the house, the living room is public whereas the bedrooms are private. Although much else has changed about public and private spaces since the period Habermas described in the quoted passage, this backstage-frontstage aspect is still recognizable in contemporary imaginings of bourgeois residences (see Goffman 1959).

The process of fractal recursion allows and indeed invites erasures. In general, erasures are forms of forgetting, denying, ignoring, or forcibly eliminating those distinctions or social facts that fail to fit the picture of the world presented by an ideology. Here, however, I am focusing more narrowly only on erasures that are linked to fractal recursions, and these can work in at least two ways. One level of distinction can be foregrounded at the expense of another, eliding or ignoring that there have been several nested contrasts made. This happens in the practice of calling the *salon* public although it surely was still part of the larger private sphere of the entire house itself. In these cases, fractal recursions focus on similarities between contrasts made at different scales, and the differences are ignored. The several (somewhat different) distinctions involved in the reiterations can then be conflated into a single contrast. But erasure can also operate in a way that does not entirely obliterate newly created nestings in existing distinctions but merely highlights their similarities. This makes new contrasts seem like old friends returning in somewhat different clothes, novel versions of familiar phenomena.

An ethnographic example illustrates both fractal recursion and erasure. Biggart (1986) has argued that blue-collar women in the United States prefer jobs in direct sales such as Amway and Tupperware because this work provides needed money while allowing the women to retain their ideals of a public/private divide in which they are supposed to be in the private unpaid (home) sphere, whereas waged work is public (away from home) and done by men. One Tupperware dealer put it this way in an interview:

> I was driving my son and four friends to a birthday party, and I heard them talking in the back about their moms working. And one of the kids says, "Say, does your mommy work?" And he goes, "no." That's what I want. I don't want them to think I work. They don't even think that I have a job because I'm not gone from eight to five. [Biggart 1986:82]

We can analyze this snippet by noting that the speaker provides a small narrated event in which she represents her son representing her as a "stay-at-home mom." Both the narrated event and the speech event of storytelling to the interviewer bear the earmarks of status competition, *within* an ideology that values the stay-at-home mother. The interviewee succeeds in her own status competition by showing her son winning his. The Tupperware dealer maintains the value of the home–work (private-public) dichotomy, even as she admits to overstepping it by holding a paid job. She compensates, however, by switching her own perspective. She applies the home-work distinction within the world of paid work. The same criterion (home–work) now distinguishes between those jobs that are noticeably away from home and those that take her away from home less often and at less predictable times. When the social world is narrowed and subdivided in this way, the speaker gets to claim a valued status. To make the claim, however, the speaker must deny (erase) the importance of the overarching home-work distinction, while reapplying it in the limited world of mothers who work for pay.

Fractal recursion and erasure are commonplace in social theory as well. Pateman (1988) charges Rousseau with duplicity because his distinction between private property and public state rested on a previous, unacknowledged dichotomy between a more general private (the domestic) and a more general public (the social). By ignoring the earlier distinction, she claims, he was able to ignore the foundational role of women in social life. Habermas makes the same semiotic move as Rousseau. In his celebrated analysis, Habermas argued that the early bourgeois public sphere depends on a first distinction between what the social actors he was analyzing thought of as the private realm and the sphere of public authority, made up of the state and the court. He then continues: "[W]ithin the realm that was the preserve of private people we . . . distinguish again between private and public spheres. The private sphere comprised civil society in the narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor, embedded in it was the family and its interior domain" (1989:30). Here, by dint of fractal analogy, a novel sphere of political activity is imagined. As these illustrations suggest, the classic analyses of the public/private distinction are neither mistakes nor incoherent. They are examples of a general and widespread semiotic practice.

Even within a single ideological frame, recursion and erasure can have quite varied social effects. Recall that public and private are aligned with different values, for they are linked to different legal rights and responsibilities. And they are associated with different normative aesthetic and moral stances. Therefore, the categorization of an act, person, or utterance as public or private can have significant consequences. It can precipitate or stave off legal proceedings, damage or enhance political careers, and change what can be said and done without normative reproach. To the extent that fractal recursions, when paired with the possibility of subsequent erasures, can finesse the categorization of social actions, these semiotic moves are powerful political tools. But the results of their use are not uniform. Pateman might well be right that Rousseau's erasure of women legitimated their exclusion from political life. By contrast, for Biggart's working mothers, fractal recursion and erasure mediate the contradictory demands made on them by their ideals and their financial circumstances, very likely disguising from them their own disadvantaged position. And one could argue that for Habermas and the social theorists he discusses, the logic of recursion and erasure were creative steps that contributed to constructing new social forms such as "publics" and civil societies.

Metaphors and Extensions

The examples given so far emphasize the referential use of words such as *public* and *private, home* and *work.* The ubiquity of fractal recursions in the application of these lexical items shows them to be shifters. Their denotation is not fixed but changes systematically with the comparative frame that is presupposed or entailed

in the context of use. Fractal embeddings invoke changes in perspective that highlight similarities among categories of denoted objects that in other situations could be designated as distinct or even opposites. This is one way in which reference—even "literal" reference—has an indexical component: it is relational to local background assumptions, to the perspective of the user, to the user's social relations, and to the relevances constructed in interaction.[6]

Privacy and publicness are not only matters of denotation, however, nor only of institutional definition, though they are always anchored by and enacted in institutional contexts. Often they are signaled in relatively ephemeral moments of linguistic interaction, in which participants construct what they later, retrospectively and metalinguistically, label (more likely contest or struggle to label) as a "public" or "private" exchange: the quietly voiced aside to a student by a teacher during a lecture; the momentary huddle of a couple at a party; the apology to strangers that is formulated so as to be heard as insincere by co-present friends. These familiar (and generic) situations can be labeled as embeddings of private into public. By contrast, a father's dinner table "lecture" to his children is a case of embedding public into private, as is the presidential fireside chat, framed as an intimate exchange that is nevertheless broadcast across the nation on radio or TV. Similarly, counterpublics, as analyzed by Warner, rely on such embeddings: "If I address a queer public. . . . [h]owever much my address to them might be laden with intimate affect, it must be extended impersonally" (2002:121).[7]

Such nestings—like instances of reported speech—rely on the mechanisms of voicing, of transposition or calibration of speech events and narrated events.[8] Condensing mercilessly, one can say that they involve the lamination of participant frameworks and keyings relevant to previous, future, imagined, and "elsewhere" speech events onto a here and now. Such laminations in turn hinge on the interpretation of metacommunicative signals (i.e., contextualization cues, footings) such as code switching, body placement, pitch and volume, genre and register conventions, as well as the use of referential indexicals to create deictic fields that—given further information about the material surroundings and language ideologies—accomplish the construction of a "here/I/we" as against a "there/them." In this broad-stroke characterization, I am gesturing at complex communicative processes that have been carefully analyzed by many colleagues. I will not add to those analyses here. Rather, I want to build on their insights to get at a related issue: How do people move from such complex interactional signals to notions of public and private that appear in discussions about language use?

This question requires highlighting a further processual moment in which the effects of deictic signaling ("here/I/we" vs. "there/them") are interpreted as exemplars of the cultural categories of "private" and "public," which in turn provides the possibility of labeling and metaphorical extensions. The traditional technical terms often used of these deictics—*proximal* and *distal*—themselves provide a spatialized characterization of the way that indexicals create a virtual context for any interaction around an origo. Yet indexicality is as much a matter of presupposing and creating social relations, social settings, relations of truth/evidence, and time relations (among others) as spatial ones. It is therefore important to ask what aspects of the indexical relations are lexicalized—or better, objectified—in particular ideological regimes. What metaphors are used to extend them in further enactments and elaborations?

My selection of bourgeois space to illustrate American understandings of public and private was not accidental. Even a cursory inventory of metaphoric uses attests to an American predilection for spatializing public/private into "spheres," "realms," and "bounded territories." For instance, a compendium of classic feminist texts about matters of public/private presumes spaces—"[the] line between public and private is constantly being renegotiated"—and warns of the "stability and instability in the boundaries that separate these regions of social life" (Landes 1998:3).

Furthermore, these metaphors evoke a routine transformation of private people who come together to make a public, evoking the image of an audience and systematically eliding more abstract and mediated conceptualizations of publics. Although Hill lists four dimensions along which American folk theory divides public and private, a spatial separation is presupposed in all. If U.S. liberal ideologies focus on *spatial* deictics, nominalizing them as a means of theorizing the difference between public/private, they also elaborate and extend the metaphors, yielding prototypical imageries of the body as a space, the psyche as interiority, and a characteristic fear of "invasion" of privacy.

Related to this is the philosophical debate about the ideal of liberal democratic politics as public because spatially "open" and therefore "transparent" to inspection. This is ritually and institutionally enacted through figurations of space, such as arguments about rules for admission of audiences to legal procedures and about the televising of judicial proceedings. There is a feedback or reflexive effect here: language ideologies focus attention on spatial deictics, and reciprocally, the spatializing metaphors then support ideological discussions that figure public and private primarily as spaces. I turn now to the contrasting case of Eastern Europe to show that other cultural formations, even when they rely on notions of public/private, do not thematize them in this way.

Public/Private in Eastern Europe

Public and private were active cultural categories throughout the Communist period, despite the party-state's attempts to eliminate private property and radically restructure familial life. The nationalization of entire economies in Eastern Europe, and the elimination of economic and political actors independent of the state, allowed state bureaucracies to organize, plan, and dominate most of social life. Cultural notions of public and private were not abandoned but were reconfigured to comprehend this transformation (Gal and Kligman 2000: chap 3). By the late Communist period (1970s–1980s), the contrast of public/private was aligned with oppositions of state versus society, system versus individual, centrally planned versus market-oriented. As in the West, this contrast was mapped onto many further distinctions, coding what were seen as opposed and antagonistic moral principles. These revolved around work ethics, responsibility, and relative power. In public workplaces (state-owned offices and factories) there was much loafing and absenteeism, but on private plots and private projects people valued and practiced extremes of overwork. The public (the state and the party) was seen as powerful, the private (imagined as ordinary or little people) as victimized.

Forms of talk were archetypal features of public versus private, so that in Eastern Europe too, this distinction was part of a language ideology. The imperative to be honest and responsible in the private contrasted with distrust and duplicity in dealings with public institutions. Public talk was understood to be insincere and empty, mere political cliché requiring dissimulation (by the performer) and decoding (by audience or addressee). The emblematic public genre was "propaganda." One prototypical image of the public event was the Communist celebration—speeches, applause—in which no one believed. Another was the state bureaucrat mouthing socialist platitudes while refusing the government service requested. By contrast, private talk was supposed to be intense, emotional, heartfelt, and trusting. As Lampland noted in her ethnography of rural Hungary in the 1980s: "In contrast to the party's view that all realms of society should be subordinated to socialist ideology, villagers drew a stark distinction between public and private life in speech and in deed" (1995:2). They distinguished between "the posturing of vacuous politics and the real, substantial, truthful site of the home and hearth" (1995:346; see also Ries 1997). Similarly, Wedel remarked about 1980s Poland: "Poles live two lives, the public and the private . . . one moral code is reserved for the private world of family and friends, another one for the public" (1986:15–16). In East Germany, native analysts

described privacy as that situation when "the politicians, planners, propagandists, the collective, the great goal, the cultural legacy, [. . .] all these depart so that a good man, with his family and among friends, can water his potted flowers, wash his car, play [the card game] Skat, have conversations, celebrate holidays" (Gaus 1986:117, quoted in Berdahl 1999:116).

Although the categories were presented by participants as dichotomies, ethnographic evidence showed that, as in the American case, oppositions were embedded in each other, and fractal recursions and erasures occurred together. Wedel reported an incident in Poland in the 1980s: "An employee took a desk from a state-owned factory, intending to resell it. He left the desk in a truck near his apartment building until it could be delivered to the intended purchaser. But to his dismay, it disappeared" (1986:15). By the moral rules of public and private life, removing the desk from the factory did not count as theft at all, since it was merely taking from the public, the state. The disappearance from the street, however, was something else: the man "complained bitterly to his neighbors that 'people are dishonest and immoral'" (15). This is not an illustration of hypocrisy. On the contrary, according to Wedel's account and my own parallel experiences in Hungary, the first man (who took the desk from the factory) and the second man (who took the desk from the truck) would have agreed in principle: for both there would be a distinction between "theft" and justified "takings," the first relevant to private situations, the second to public situations. They differed, however, in how they judged the nestings of public and private for the particular occasion. What was private for the owner of the truck was subdivided again by the other person to create a public in which the desk was again available for righteous taking.

A parallel example involved the morality of work in Hungary. Virtually everyone active in the "second economy" of private plots and services also held a job in a state-owned enterprise. The second economy provided for villagers the experience of control and mastery by which to define their selves against the state (Lampland 1995:330). However, this ideological distinction did not prevent—indeed it enabled—the nesting of "private" activity inside time, places, and institutions considered "public." Thus, Lampland reported that the practice of "turning out private projects during one's [official, state] work time using factory machines and materials" (1995:320) was common enough to merit its own slang term (*fusizni*). An even more frequent practice was "women doing their grocery shopping during [their] office hours [in state jobs], or people running bureaucratic errands [for their second-economy enterprises] during [state] work time" (1995:307).[9]

Early analysts of the Eastern European scene concurred with participants and presented public and private as a simple dichotomy. Since the end of Communism, however, analysts have stressed that public and private moralities and institutions were mutually dependent and intertwined. The "second economies" of socialism were parasitic on the redistributive state system; small-scale private agriculture was dependent on and exploited the state collectives (Verdery 1996; Berdahl 1999). Far from speaking the truth to and about those considered one's private circle, people routinely denounced and falsely accused even members of their own families (Kligman 1998). The recognition of interdependence between public and private is important, but it does not do justice to the precision with which public/private operated—in fractal recursions and erasures—as an ideology of differentiation.

Metaphors and Extensions

Let us now turn the question around and ask how the evidence from Eastern Europe, when contrasted to evidence on American bourgeois practices, can help clarify the workings of metaphors in language ideologies. In my reanalysis of the Polish example of the "stolen" desk, I eschewed spatial metaphors for public and private because they were absent in the original description. Instead, I have searched for representations originating in 1980s Eastern Europe in which there is metacommentary

about interaction that would help reveal how indexicals were interpreted in encounters relevant to the public/private distinction.

A ubiquitous joke of the period ran: "They pretend to pay us; we pretend to work." This satirized the failing shortage economy, its invariably low pay, and the duplicity of public life. For my purposes the form of the joke is important: those who pay are officers of the state, the archetypal public, and thus the discursive opposition is expressed as a victimized "we" against a powerful "they." There is also a hint of complicity between the two. Lampland cited the complaint of a villager in rural Hungary that reflects the same assumptions: "At least when the manor belonged to Eszterhazy [before the Second World War], we knew it was his. There was no contradiction between his owning it and our working for him. But now, all they can talk about is how the cooperative is *ours, we* are the owners. . . . [But] *they* still run our lives, all in the interests of the working class. It's a sham." (1995:269, emphasis added). As another example, recall the quotation cited earlier, from the German analyst of East Germany, in which public and private are types of persons and activities rather than spaces: "politicians, propagandists, planners" versus "the good man and his family among friends . . . water[ing] his flowers." In the example of the Polish truck, the vehicle's spatial location was not important. Even on the street, it was understood as "ours" for one man, "theirs" for the other. In another Polish illustration, what one read in the papers was disbelieved and thus different from what people repeated as truth to *swoj czlowiek* (one of us) (Wedel 1986:24-26). Similarly, the young Polish translator of a book of interviews with old Communist leaders identified the interviewees as those who used "language not as a way of conveying their meaning but as an instrument for distorting and concealing the truth." The book was entitled simply *Them* (Toranska 1987:9).

These examples of metatalk about public and private suggest that Eastern European metaphors *personified* the distinction rather than spatializing it. If public and private are projections or objectifications derived from indexicals that create an interactional here/I/we as against a there/them, then the Eastern European examples thematized personal deictics rather than spatial ones. They created an extensionalized, imagined assembly of "us" against a similarly projected "them." Compatible with this understanding of public/private as a form of us/them, and arguably elaborated out of it, was a popular social theory of the period that insisted on a combative relation between social groups projected as "society" (us) against the "state" (them). This line of thought was strongest in Polish writings but was embraced also by Czech and Hungarian dissidents and by scholars from other parts of the world who wrote about this region.

This metaphorical elaboration holds further consequences. The dichotomy of "we as victims" versus "they who have the power" can be recursively applied, so that any imagined assembly of "us" can be divided further into an "us" and a "them." The same is true for any group of "them." It should come as no surprise, then, that Communist cadres in Hungary routinely claimed that they themselves were not really examples of the hated "them"; they were instead the "reformers" or "progressives" of the party membership, the relatively innocent "us" among the really villainous "them." This allowed many party members to claim to be the victims within the Communist party or bureaucracy, by subdividing the party so that others were identified as the holders of power. By this logic, if the recursions are continued at smaller and smaller scales or seen from closer and narrower perspectives, even single individuals can be subdivided within themselves. In a justly celebrated essay on the forms of power in the final years of state socialism, the Czech writer Václav Havel, a leading theorist of his own society, put his finger on just this dilemma.

Discussing the split between public and private as a contrast between different kinds of people, Havel distinguished between "individuals" and others. He asked rhetorically, "Is it not characteristic of [this] system that, on all levels of the power hierarchy, individuals are increasingly being pushed aside by faceless people, puppets,

those uniformed flunkies of the rituals and routines of power?" (1985:34). He then performed a fractal recursion: "[O]nly a very generalized view . . .permits us to divide society into the rulers and the ruled. In the post-totalitarian system, this line [of conflict] runs *de facto* through each person, for everyone in his or her own way is both a victim and a supporter of the system" (1985:37). Some years later, Humphrey described the same phenomenon: "In the Soviet-type command economy, the structure of domination does not consist of a focal nexus surrounded by a subordinated mass; rather, domination resides in a series of equivalent positions in nesting hierarchies, such that a similar domination may be exercised at each level. . . . [V]irtually everyone had a double life" (1994:24).

As with the American examples discussed earlier, there was no single political effect of fractal logic. The earlier formulation of a direct opposition between "society" and "state" erased recursions and thus the many forms of complicity to which Havel drew attention in the text quoted previously. In the logic of such erasure, there is a direct opposition of "us" and "them," suggesting a strategy of direct and utopian assault by "society" on the "state." But the fractal logic also allowed for creation of new and oppositional social forms. Havel found a "them" inside every individual, identifying a split self, one part of which was complicit with the hated system. By employing what is retrospectively recognizable as an equally fractal logic, Havel and other dissidents also succeeded in proposing a political strategy for enacting opposition to the state.

This more subtle opposition foregrounded fractal recursions instead of erasing them. Those living under Communism, Havel and other dissidents argued, should live an "anti-politics" (Konrád 1984; Havel 1985). Acting as private individuals, they should pretend to act as responsible, truth-telling citizens, even when forced to engage with the duplicitous, public state. To enact these oppositional activities, poetry readings took place even when they were banned, as did activities such as "free universities." Samizdat publishing secretly used public presses as well as individual residences, and even phone booths on street corners became important sites for antistate communication. But places were less important than the hope of transformed human beings. Havel's was a vision of moral salvation through a fractal imagery that projected social groups and their activities out of personal deictics: there would be a world for "us" (private) people who think of ourselves as being different from "them" by dint of our attempt to remain truthful and ethical (as befits private life) while necessarily engaged in public activities defined by "them."

Conclusion: Metaphors, Anchors, Comparisons

Like the bourgeois public/private familiar from recent American usage, the cultural category of public/private in Eastern Europe was derived from Western European patterns established during the rise of liberalism and capitalism. Yet the deliberate undermining of these categories and practices by Communist parties in the 1950s and 1960s created institutional arrangements and cultural presuppositions (including language ideologies) that, while reminiscent of the bourgeois distinction, differed significantly from it. My goal in this article has been to use this historically created similarity-in-difference to explore the role of metaphors and anchoring in the process by which language ideologies construct differentiation.

In both regions, ideologies of public and private were organized around contrasting values, prototypical images of work, space, talk, types of people, and social relations. In each case, ideologies picked out, focused on, and detached features of signaling that are ubiquitous in interaction, making some aspects of such signaling relatively more discussable through the creation of metaphors and hence more open to circulation. Schematically, what I have been calling U.S. ideologies focused on spatial deictics and formulated public/private as metaphors of space: spheres, realms, and closeness to the body of social actors. Eastern Europeans, by contrast, focused on personal deictics, formulating a private and public that projected imagined social

groups as a powerless victimized "us" that stood against a similarly projected but powerful "them." In each case, systematic fractal recursions of the public/private dichotomy and its associated imagery made the supposedly fixed boundaries between public and private—whether spatialized or personified—a form of misrecognition. Indeed, the notion of "boundary" itself is an effect of this complex semiotic process, one in which the recursions—or the possibilities of recursions—are simply ignored, denied, or erased.

Yet the logic of fractal recursions suggests that these two schemes are in principle transformations of each other. There is the conceptual possibility of projections of space onto personhood and vice versa. If one starts from an American perspective, when the public/private distinction is invoked at the narrowest, most limited scale, then private spaces can be located inside the bodies of social actors. Indeed spaces interior to the body, or interior to the psyche, are constituted as the most private of all. Because they too can be divided, there is always the possibility of interior oppositions, often formulated as the phenomenon of public and private selves. Conversely, if one starts from the Eastern European perspective and projects recursions to broader and broader scales, then the opposition between "us" and "them"—the private people and the public state—can ultimately be extended to become a spatial divide corresponding to the geographical boundaries of the Cold War. It is in part because analogical processes (diagrammatic icons) such as fractal recursion are so powerful in potential that analysis must focus on erasures and on the metaphors that anchor particular ideological schemes at specific scales, forcing attention to some contrasts at the expense of others.

Examination of such metaphors is one step in formulating the subtle differences between what I have been calling the American cultural scheme and the Eastern European one. If the anchoring metaphor of the American scheme is space, the node of anxiety and contestation is invasion of privacy, violation of boundaries. Public and private selves (also seen as hidden spaces) are imagined to emerge legitimately when people move into and out of different social "realms" or places. Indeed, anyone without such a psychic division might well be open to the charge of inauthenticity, to no true interiority. In what I have characterized as the Eastern European scheme, by contrast, Havel's insight about a public/private split within individuals was the recognition of a profound ethical dilemma: anyone found having both a public and a private self risked accusations of betrayal and duplicity because public and private evoked—in ideology—two morally weighted and dangerously antagonistic social groups. This was a formulation of a central moral dilemma of the system: the complicity of individuals with the state.

In each case, political discussions relied on projections derived from interactions that were also, in dialectical fashion, part of the ideology that motivated the interactional distinctions themselves. Comparison highlights the different nodes and scales of obsession in each system, the contrasts seen to be the root "source" of further metaphorical elaborations. Debates about public and private were politically consequential in both cases, but not in easily predictable ways. It is worth noting that in both systems, social and cultural theories were active sites of the semiotic processes discussed. To the extent that public/private resembles more familiar sociolinguistic distinctions such as high-low, this analysis is a cautionary reminder: When our terms of art are borrowed from the metapragmatic vocabulary of the social groups we analyze, the interdiscursive linkage of those terms with our own sociocultural theories involves the very processes we study.

Notes

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1. "High/low" and "public/private" seem to be broader categorizations than those associated with linguistic indexes of social identities. Note that I am considering the circulation of a contrast set, not a single term or category. See Schwartz (1981) for a discussion of high/low as ubiquitous metaphors in social theory. Although there is not much work on public/private in linguistic anthropology, see the articles collected in Gal and Woolard (2001). Irvine (1985) and McElhinney (1997) explored the potential of the distinction for sociolinguistic analysis.

2. Following Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) and the literature they review, I include as evidence about language ideology not only discussions about language and linguistic form but also action and practices in and around the use of language. In the present article, I take up the suggestion, made by a number of scholars, that "ideologies that seem to be about religion, political theory, human subjectivity, or science can be reinterpreted as implicit entailments of language ideologies or the precipitates of widespread linguistic practices" (Gal and Woolard 2001:10). See Milroy (2000) and Agha (1998) for different approaches to comparison of language ideologies.

3. In addition to my own work with Irvine, this brief summary implicitly draws on notions of voicing (Bakhtin 1984), contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982), orders of indexicality (Silverstein 1992), and entextualization (Silverstein and Urban 1996; Bauman and Briggs 1990) to adumbrate a complex process.

4. My examples aim to be suggestive, not exhaustive. For the United States, I use ethnographic studies from different social classes and regions. Examples from Eastern Europe draw on several countries, ignoring national differences, but I have carefully restricted my choices to one era of the Communist period, circa 1975–1985. By relying here on the published reports of others-including scholars from the region writing at that time-I hope to avoid simply finding, through my own observations, the evidence I seek. My own fieldwork in Hungary and Austria provides a background for this analysis. Cognates of the English lexical items "public" and "private" exist in the languages of the region, though there are often other sets of overlapping, related terms that are etymologically more local, such as "privát" and "publikum" in Hungarian but also the Finno-Ugric roots "köz" and "magán" with similar meanings.

5. This is one part of a process that Irvine and I earlier labeled "iconization" but that we now more precisely name "rhematization," building on Peirce's notion of "rheme" as an indexical sign that its interpretant takes to be an icon.

6. For recent discussions of the relevant notion of reference, see Hanks (1990) and articles collected in Gumperz and Levinson (1996), drawing on Putnam (1975).

7. I have not taken up the question of "publics" and "counterpublics" as performatively created and imagined communities (Warner 2002), but they are in some ways reliant on the logic described here.

8. For the general approach to indexicality in interaction on which I rely, I am indebted to the continuing development of Jakobson's insights about shifters in the work of Silverstein (1992), Ochs (1996), and Agha (1998), as well as the extension of Bakhtin's (1981) notion of voicing and Goffman's (1979) notion of participation frameworks by Irvine (1996), Hanks (1996), Haviland (1996), and others.

9. See Kenedi (1981), Hankiss (1984) and Konrád (1984) for revealing discussions of this aspect of the Hungarian second economy.

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