

Weekly Assignment 3. Cultural Appropriation

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3 . *Explain the difference between the normative and the descriptive use of the term 'cultural appropriation'.*

The main difference between the normative and the descriptive use of the term 'cultural appropriation' lies in whether it is used in a value-neutral way.

When the term 'cultural appropriation' is used in a normative sense, the act of cultural appropriation itself is considered to be morally wrong and therefore is to be criticized and boycotted, regardless of the form it takes or the consequence it gives rise to. There is a default position when people use the term 'cultural appropriation' in a normative sense, for they judge it to be something morally unacceptable and reproachable without a second thought before actually diving into a particular situation. It is quite understandable why most of people adopt the normative sense of this term considering that, under most circumstances, cultural appropriation is offensive or even harmful to the appropriated culture since it is extremely likely to be misrepresented when interpreted without its original contexts. People hold an underlying negative attitude towards cultural appropriation when employing the normative sense, and tend to criticize this very act.

On the other hand, when the term 'cultural appropriation' is used in a descriptive sense, the act of cultural appropriation is discussed in a value-neutral way without any moral judgement in advance. Descriptive sense of the term 'cultural appropriation' is frequently adopted in philosophical discussions because the main question itself of these discussions is to judge whether it is acceptable in some cases and in what aspect it is considered wrongful by the public. When using the descriptive sense, people literally 'describe' cultural appropriation as a mere phenomenon, and the question

whether it is wrong is left to be discussed taking the particular situation into account. When the offense or harm caused by cultural appropriation is counterweighed by its valuable features, then people may tend to support this particular kind of cultural appropriation.

In conclusion, the descriptive use of the term 'cultural appropriation' is value-neutral, while the normative use is not.