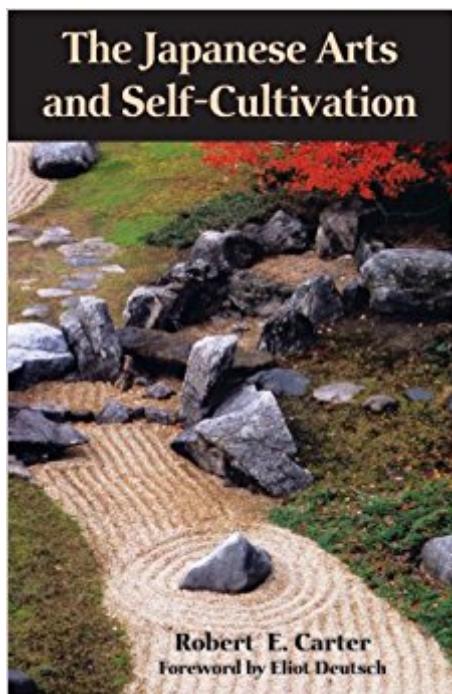


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# The Japanese Arts And Self-Cultivation



## Synopsis

Explores how spiritual values are learned and mind and body developed through the practice of the Japanese arts. It is through the practice of the arts, and not through rules or theory that moral and spiritual values are taught in Japan. Author Robert E. Carter examines five arts (or "ways" in Japan): the martial art of aikido, Zen landscape gardening, the Way of Tea, the Way of Flowers, and pottery making. Each art is more than a mere craft, for each takes as its goal not just the teaching of ethics but the formation of the ethical individual. Transformation is the result of diligent practice and each art recognizes the importance of the body. Training the mind as well as the body results in important insights, habits, and attitudes that involve the whole person, both body and mind. This fascinating book features the author's interviews with masters of the arts in Japan and his own experiences with the arts, along with background on the arts and ethics from Japanese philosophy and religion. Ultimately, the Japanese arts emerge as a deep cultural repository of ideal attitudes and behavior, which lead to enlightenment itself. "What makes this book such an enjoyable read is the highly personal style that Carter brings to his journey across Japan as he recounts his visits to the different masters of the arts." *Philosophy East & West* offers us a clear guide to some religious, philosophical, and historical traditions within Japanese arts, to counter forcefully the prejudice that Japan does not have an ethics comparable to that of the West. | the author concludes that morality and ethics are not learned in Japan through words, rules, or principles, but by physical and practical training. This is a very significant insight | a wonderful resource for everyone involved in any field of Japanese studies. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* | this book exemplifies the mindful enrichment of everyday life that we think of as Japanese and exhibits precisely those elements of Asian awareness and attentiveness to detail that appeal most strongly to the West. *Library Journal Academic Newswire* | captures[s] the intertwining of art, philosophy, and religion as it relates to the Japanese ethic of self-cultivation. Ethical action is taught through the arts derived from Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism, rather than learned by abstract theory | The style is clear | the author writes for nonspecialists. *CHOICE* | "Easy and engaging reading. Profound ideas | groundbreaking. I believe that this outstanding book would be of great interest not only to philosophers and students of philosophy | but to much of the general public as well. In particular, I recommend it wholeheartedly as essential and necessary (as well as relatively easy and engaging) reading for every serious martial artist who wishes to develop a greater understanding of the deeper dimensions of the arts." *Jerry Larock, Aikido*

Journal  
"This excellent book on an important topic conveys a fine sense of the variety of the arts in Japan, regarded as ways of life and therefore harboring significant ethical dimensions. Written in a relaxed, accessible style with much of the text based on interviews, which make for an especially lively read, it will also appeal to readers beyond the academy."  
• Graham Parkes, translator and coauthor of *Reading Zen in the Rocks: The Japanese Dry Landscape Garden* by François Berthier

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## Customer Reviews

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I have been practicing aikido for several years, and was surprised to find the first chapter of this book deals with that subject. The book explains how different Japanese arts affect the practitioner. The author is an academic, but the is very down to earth and includes many interviews with practitioners of a variety of Japanese arts. I have recommended and shared this book with a number of friends and all found that it gave them a much deeper understanding of Japanese arts, including one who had made a number of visits to relatives of his wife in Japan.

A thoroughly unique perspective on traditional Japanese arts. It really is a must read, if you are considering it. Like an excellent graduate school course combining art, philosophy, and Asian studies.

this book really hits home regarding the mindset of the japanese man/woman

Arigato

As a martial artist with 34 years of experience, I believe I've found a real gem! Prof. Robert E. Carter has certainly outdone himself with his groundbreaking new book, *The Japanese Arts and Self-cultivation*. In it, Carter explores Japan's unique approach to ethics by focussing in on and examining 5 examples of its arts: Aikido, landscape gardening, the way of tea, the way of flowers, and the way of pottery. Much of this exploration takes the form of interesting personal experiences and lively interviews with great masters of these arts. The various arts of Japan are perceived by many people either in a wholly pragmatic, utilitarian manner -- as practical methods of achieving some end -- or as mere artistry and aesthetic affectation. Some people are able to appreciate that the application of the philosophical and psychological dimensions of such training can aid technical prowess. Beyond this, precious few seem privy to a much grander vista; specifically to a realization of the extreme importance of the social, ethical, and spiritual domains, and the impact that training in the Japanese arts can have on one's personal development in these areas. All of this is clearly and forcefully articulated by Carter in this book. In his typical fashion, Carter uses a cross-cultural, comparative approach to clarify eastern and western positions and further elucidate his thesis. The most obvious characteristic of all these arts is that they are intensely physical practices and, thus, they perfectly exemplify the Japanese means to ethical training -- the cultivation of ethical behaviour through concrete, physical action. This stands in stark contrast to the western approach to ethics which is predominantly analytical, academic, and intellectual. Carter's profound conclusion: morality and ethics are not learned through mere words, by memorizing lists of rules, but by actually, physically practising them! And the Japanese arts are avenues that can amply provide such practice. In a similar vein, an authentic morality is not based on a fear of punishment or a promise of rewards (a position that seems predominant in western religious ethical thought) but is dependent on the cultivation of specific pro-social attitudes, in particular that of empathy, a felt connection to others, and the compassion that results. It is this which is more correctly understood to be the true source of authentic ethical behaviour, and it is to the cultivation of these various attitudes that the Japanese arts aim and excel. Throughout his book, Carter offers a penetrating analysis into the Japanese view of ethics and the cultural methods developed since time immemorial to cultivate its values. From the arts as mere practical skills, to the arts as pathways to self-realization (the discovery of one's connection to/ oneness with the universe), to ethical cultivation and a strong social focus, the thing that Carter makes clear is that a practice of the different arts impacts all of these levels of self-development simultaneously. Ultimately, an immersion in the physical practice of

an art can lead to the psychological state of emptiness/no-self that not only is the source of all unconscious, skilful action but is also the basis for all empathetic, ethical behaviour -- of our ability to come together in correct human relations. So far, I have not yet come across another book or author that deals with this important, seminal topic in such depth and in as clear and engrossing a manner. In conclusion, I believe that this outstanding book would be of great interest not only to philosophers and students of philosophy (those interested in ethics generally and in Oriental ethics and arts specifically) but to the general public as well. In particular, I recommend it wholeheartedly as essential and necessary (as well as relatively easy and engaging) reading for every serious martial artist who wishes to develop a greater understanding of the deeper dimensions of the arts. I also highly recommend, as an intimate companion to this book, Carter's previous book, *Encounter With Enlightenment: A Study of Japanese Ethics* (Suny Series in Modern Japanese Philosophy), which provides important philosophical foundations for the very same topic.

Mr. Carter's new book provides readers with a fine introduction to several classical Japanese art forms, while it explains how these cultural arts function as "Ways" that lead to spiritual realization. The author's many years of experience in this field are clearly evident, and the book will appeal to readers well familiar with these disciplines as well as novices.

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