Julian Baggini, *How the World Thinks. A Global History of Philosophy*. London: Granta, 2018. ISBN 9781783782284. Xxxiii + 398.

English-language histories of philosophy published over the last two hundred years have typically all followed the same script: philosophy arose out of the blue in ancient Greece about 2600 years ago, when Thales theorized that water was the fundamental principle of nature, and was then developed by the Greeks and later the Romans. The script then states that for the last 2000 years philosophy has been cultivated by other European thinkers, most notably those from Germany, France, and Britain, with American thinkers also contributing over the last two centuries. The clear implication is that anything worthy of the name philosophy occurred in the west, more particularly, in western Europe and America.

Such parochialism is puzzling, not least because the nineteenth century saw the publication of a number of books on various non-western philosophies, a process that accelerated dramatically throughout the twentieth century with a good many specialist works on Chinese philosophy, Indian philosophy, and African philosophy becoming available. Curiously, the accumulation of so much evidence of philosophical activity outside the west did not induce historians of philosophy to change the contents of their works – they stuck rigidly to the Eurocentric narrative outlined above – but merely the titles: from the 1930s onwards, historians of philosophy started to call their books *History of Western Philosophy* rather than *History of Philosophy*, the moniker that had been invariably used before that. By indicating that they were writing histories of *western* philosophy, these authors were tacitly acknowledging that there were philosophies outside of the west, even if they opted not to discuss them in their work.

Thankfully, things are now changing. Over the last decade or so, there have been many calls for western philosophy to abandon its traditional insularism, most provocatively in Bryan Van Norden’s *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (Columbia University Press, 2017), and historians of philosophy are starting to heed these calls. While we still do not have a true history of philosophy in all of its forms, Peter Adamson’s ambitious multi-volume *A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* series (Oxford University Press, 2014-) has made a positive start in addressing this gap, though the project remains ongoing and the series is still far from complete. To that we may now add Julian Baggini’s *How the World Thinks: A Global History of Philosophy*, a no less ambitious work in that it seeks to cover many of the world’s different philosophical traditions in a single volume of just under 400 pages. To achieve this, Baggini wisely adopts a thematic rather than chronological approach, dividing the book into five parts: What the World Knows, How the World Is, Who in the World Are We?, How the World Lives, and Concluding Thoughts, each containing between two and eight chapters that focus on a specific philosophical idea or theme, such as logic, time, and harmony, as viewed by one or more philosophical tradition.

Much of the discussion is devoted to various non-western philosophies, with a heavy emphasis on Chinese and Indian philosophy, and – to a lesser extent – Japanese and Islamic philosophy (and, in the book’s final few pages, Russian philosophy). This ensures that the reader gets acquainted with a variety of ideas from a variety of traditions, without one dominating the discussion. As Baggini is, by his own admission, an expert only on western philosophy, the approach he adopts is that of a “philosophical journalist” (xx) whose information on unfamiliar topics and traditions comes from reading a number of key texts and from conducting interviews with leading scholars. This gives the book a certain charm, with Baggini positioning himself as a student trying to come to terms with ideas and theories different from those with which he is familiar.

Most chapters begin with Baggini recounting his own personal experiences of conferences attended, visits to temples, museums, and art galleries, films watched on plane journeys etc. These anecdotes are not mere padding for the lay reader but serve to illustrate how the philosophies under discussion are reflected in the real world and so extend beyond dry, academic works of limited readership. As befits an exercise in comparative philosophy, Baggini identifies points of contact between western and non-western philosophies as well as points of divergence. In doing so, he does not make generalisations about different cultures and their philosophies, or draw sharp distinctions between them, but instead seeks the “tendencies, trends and emphases” (219) that make each philosophical tradition distinct.

Baggini ends many chapters with suggestions of what the west can learn from non-western philosophies. For example, in chapter 4 he advises that the west ought to reconsider its notion of rationality, with its heavy emphasis on logic, in light of the philosophies of other cultures (68); in chapter 12 he suggests that in eastern philosophies “we might find models for living as mortals in a natural world” (145), and in chapter 19 he states that “ideas about individuals and society in China and Japan can help us rebalance Western culture, with its emphasis on individualism and autonomy” (216). Yet while Baggini clearly finds (philosophical) value in a number of non-western ideas and emphases, he does not endorse any as such. Predictably, the ideas he does openly endorse are those from the western, European tradition of which he is part, with Baggini taking an explicitly Kantian position on a number of issues, such as epistemology (33-35) and metaphysics (169).

On the question of balance, there are positives and negatives. On the positive side, Baggini does an excellent job of showing that the western philosophical tradition is only one among many, a lesson that many in the west have yet to learn. On the negative side, while Baggini’s coverage of Eastern philosophies – Hindu, Buddhism, Daoism, Islam – is generally very good, he says nothing at all about Jewish philosophy and very little about any African philosophy, just a smattering of paragraphs here and there.

Despite these gripes, *How the World Thinks* is a worthwhile book principally because it does what previous histories of philosophy did not, namely take non-western philosophy seriously. The fact that it is highly readable, offering an entertaining (if not entirely impartial) journey through some of the world’s various philosophies, will endear it to the general reader, while philosophers weary of western parochialism will find much here of interest too.