Considering that “New Age” remains a disputed category, as the editors of this collection stress from the start, it is ironic to see how many books and articles continue to use it, for lack of a better (or should we rather say catchier?) label. This collection is no exception: while some authors briefly seize the opportunity to (re)engage in discussion on the label itself, others use it to cover an extensive range of groups, beliefs and practices, confirming the lack of clear boundaries for circumscribing the term “New Age”. This would have proved irritating if the purpose of the volume had been to focus on the concept itself. Fortunately, the approach is not to offer a new definition of the concept, nor to provide an overview of various academic approaches and debates (which is already available in the *Handbook of New Age*, Brill, 2007). The book deals with New Age as a field for the contemporary study of religion. It reflects the desire of researchers to move forward and to bring fresh insights, rather than to attempt once more to decide if New Age should or should not be used as a category. The collection is not an introduction to New Age beliefs and readers who are already cognizant of research on New Age and alternative religions are more likely to benefit from reading it. It is also not a collection of previously published articles, since only one of the fifteen chapters has previously appeared in a journal.

Those familiar with Steven J. Sutcliffe’s important work on New Age won’t be surprised that his initial chapter rightly emphasizes the need for an historical approach to the subject and to avoid the problematic label of “New Age movement” if it is made to include such a wide range of groups and phenomena. Rather than following the world religions taxonomy, Sutcliffe advocates a ‘model or prototype of religion based on ‘elementary forms” rather than on rationalized religion entities’.

In order to approach fluid religious realities, the identification of key concepts clearly proves to be more fruitful than the laying down of boundaries: thus Liselotte Frisk found “healing” and “energy” to be widely shared concepts, and some practices (meditation, crystal, massage, etc.) to be central. But should we call this “New Age”? There can be no unanimity on the subject. Whatever our choice, it does not diminish the intrinsic interest of the approach offered by this book: we could replace “New Age” with another label or see it as a part of ‘a richer, comprehensive’ new spirituality, as Norichika Horie does. The points made in the volume remain valid whatever the label. This reviewer is not convinced that New Age is the appropriate description, both from an emic and
etic perspective, but at the same time this does not mean that we should get rid of the concept, but rather use it more narrowly for describing millenarian post-Christian desires for a world change (thus returning to the initial core of the meaning of New Age, before it started to be applied to all possible kinds of beliefs and practices). However, this approach is not considered by any of the contributors to this volume.

Obviously, an overview of the fifteen chapters with their variety would be impossible and of little interest; the outline of the book is adequately summarized in the last part of the introduction. It seems better to focus arbitrarily on some contributions that this reviewer found to be especially useful.

A fascinating and thought-provoking chapter by Mikael Rothstein illustrates how a comparative approach can be used to study New Age beliefs. Dealing with instances of “humanimal” identities in New Age circles, after encountering a woman who told him ‘I am a dolphin!’, Rothstein explores the meaning of such beliefs (not to be understood in a literal sense) and reminds us that similar statements can be found in various societies in different historical periods. This offers a welcome reminder that we should be careful not to understand New Age only in terms of modernity and postmodernity, and that New Age beliefs are not always that new. Looking at New Age from such a perspective brings a significant change of perception, making approaches that use the tools of the history of religions fully legitimate.

That New Age is not only about novelty and discontinuity is also demonstrated by Dorota Hall, who shows that participants in the holistic milieu in Poland not infrequently integrate Roman Catholic elements, even if they interpret them in their own way. Hall positions the holistic milieu in the Polish context, between Catholicism and folk religiosity: manifestations of New Age, while similar around the world, can also be locally grounded.

New Age attraction to and use of ancient, exotic, and indigenous cultures and people are well known. But this is not a one-way process. In a chapter by Trude Fonneland and Siv Ellen Kraft on New Age, Sami shamanism and indigenous spirituality in Norway, we discover a case of New Age transformed into “indigenous spirituality”, because members of indigenous groups have appropriated its themes. While the exploitation of indigenous cultures by New Age has often been mentioned or denounced, this offers a welcome reminder that the reverse is also taking place.

For this reviewer, these were probably the most exciting parts of the volume, providing refreshing insights into the way we look at New Age. But only to select contributions from specific chapters of interest to the reviewer would not fully do justice to the volume as a whole, or to its main purpose: to use data on New Age spiritualities for rethinking the category of religion, starting