

## ONTOLOGICAL EXERCISES TO OVERCOME MISMATCH DISEASES' OBSTACLES TO HOLISTIC HEALTH

**Simon Rousseau**

The Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre, Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
simon.rousseau@mcgill.ca

**T**he current urban environment inhabited by humans in North America reflects profound changes in its physical and social architecture that occurred more rapidly than the human biological capacity to adapt. This mismatch between self and environment can result in ailments and diseases that are physical (e.g. metabolic syndrome) and psychological (e.g. anxiety, depression). These mismatch ailments act insidiously, as their chronic/diffuse nature makes them go generally unnoticed. However, their effects are no less important on overall wellbeing and deserve attention from health professionals.

The overarching hypothesis is that ontological exercises, i.e. practices that are aimed to foster a deeper understanding of the nature of being, promote holistic health to counterbalance the feeling of threat arising from the disconnect between post-modern society and the ancestral makeup of human beings. Numerous cultural practices have emphasized exercises aimed at operating transformative changes to increase wellbeing, empathy, compassion and pro-social behaviours. Ontological exercises from ancient Greeks, Buddhists and Native Americans will be explored in this context. ■