Banish Bad Thoughts?
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Question: "How does one banish bad thoughts?"

Answer: We aren't able to control the thoughts that arise in our mind any more than we are able to stop breathing. Both are inherent to who we are. Where do thoughts come from? Where do they go when we are finished thinking them? When you examine the nature of our thoughts you realize how insubstantial they actually are. It is only when you focus on them that you give them any real power.

It was Aristotle who said, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." Part of Buddhism is a practice known as "mindfulness." Mindfulness has been defined as, "paying attention to the present moment, in a particular way, without judging it." Mindfulness is becoming aware that we are not our thoughts. Thoughts arise and pass away – like clouds in the sky. Therefore there is nothing to accept or reject.

Instead of trying to banish a bad thought, a more useful approach is look at and examine the bad thought. Becoming aware of how by acting upon this thought may, very well, cause suffering to others or ourselves. It is through the practice of meditation that we develop this kind of "discriminating wisdom."