

Editorial

This edition of *Think* begins with a strongly-worded response to Brendan Larvor's piece in Issue 7, in which he condemned the Archbishop of Canterbury's recent suggestion that humanism and atheism ought not to be taught in schools alongside the major faiths. Whether or not you are convinced by Brenda Watson's arguments against Larvor, you will find her piece interesting and provocative. Watson claims at one point that atheism is a 'faith' position too. This is a suggestion often made by believers. But is it true? Whether atheism relies just as much on 'faith' as does theism is an issue we will return to in future issues.

Also in this issue, Daniel K. Sokol argues that the mere fact that something — e.g. abortion, euthanasia, cloning — produces in us a 'Yuk!' response is not enough to justify us in morally condemning it. I suspect that that Sokol is right. As Ronald Dworkin once pointed out (in response to an attempt to justify condemning homosexuality on the grounds that most people at that time were disgusted by it),

We distinguish moral positions from emotional reactions, not because moral positions are supposed to be unemotional or dispassionate — quite the reverse is true — but because the moral position is supposed to justify the emotional reaction, and not vice versa. If a man is unable to produce such reasons, we do not deny the fact of his emotional involvement, which may have important social or political consequences, but we do not take this involvement as demonstrating moral conviction. Indeed, it is just this sort of position — a severe emotional reaction to a practice or a situation for which one cannot account — that we tend to describe, in lay terms, as phobias or an obsession.

However, other philosophers (such as Michael Levin) believe it is perfectly acceptable for people to refuse to have any deal-

ings with homosexuals (including refusing to employ them, etc.) for no other reason than that they find homosexuality repugnant. This is an issue to which we will also be returning in future issues.

Stephen Law, Editor