

Jenrick's social realism bridges philosophy and policy

What sets Jenrick apart is his approach, which marries social realism with a philosophical and moral depth, an antidote to the surface-level, tribal political posturing of our times. His leadership vision, infused with aesthetic sensitivity and moral clarity, brings dignity and practicality to policy.

At the heart of Jenrick's political philosophy lies a profound understanding of social realism, drawing inspiration from the conservative intellectual Roger Scruton. Scruton believed that aesthetics, far from being a luxury, was a gateway to the divine, shaping how we understand community, duty, and the sacredness of human life.

For Jenrick, who was deeply influenced by Scruton's work, aesthetics are not mere trimmings on the edge of political discourse but central to fostering a sense of belonging and identity. He shares Scruton's belief that a well-ordered, beautiful society enriches its citizens, instilling a greater sense of responsibility toward one another. This is best encapsulated by Scruton's concept of "home"—not just as a physical shelter but as a moral anchor.

This vision is particularly evident in Jenrick's tenure as Housing Minister, where he launched the Building Beautiful Places program. Beyond merely increasing housing stock—a pressing issue in post-Brexit Britain—it sought to enhance the quality of design in new developments. Jenrick argued that the built environment plays a crucial role in shaping human behavior and relationships, and by investing in beauty, society invests in the moral edification of its people.

His efforts echoed Scruton's notion of home as a source of existential meaning. Jenrick's push for aesthetically pleasing public spaces can be traced back to a time when Scruton himself chaired the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission, a position that resonated with Jenrick's policy preferences.

But Jenrick's social realism is grounded in action, as seen in his key role in the Building Safety Bill, in response to Grenfell. Here, Jenrick's policies show their moral core. Grenfell was a reminder that housing policy touches on deeper issues of dignity, safety, and community. Jenrick's reforms prioritized human life, demanding stricter safety regulations, and ensuring that public housing is not just adequate but exemplary, reflecting a commitment to human dignity.

Jenrick's tenure also saw the introduction of the Planning for the Future white paper, an effort to streamline the planning process and give local voices more control over developments in their communities. This belief in localism—that communities should have more agency over their environments—resonates with the classic conservative principle that all politics is local, recognizing that people are more likely to flourish in environments they have had a hand in shaping.

It also draws on a deep understanding of subsidiarity, a concept found in Catholic social teaching, which holds that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, least centralized authority capable of addressing them effectively.

Where Jenrick's social realism becomes particularly interesting is in his moral underpinnings, especially his Judaeo-Christian ethos, which subtly informs his policy work. At the core is the idea of *imago dei*, the belief that every human being is made in the image of God.

This principle finds expression in Jenrick's commitment to defending the dignity of the individual. Whether addressing housing, immigration, or community cohesion, his policies have further reflected a deep respect for the individual's inherent worth.

This is most evident in his stance on the right to life. Jenrick is a firm opponent of assisted suicide, a position grounded in his belief that life, in all its stages, possesses intrinsic value. He argues that legalizing assisted suicide would devalue human life, especially the lives of the vulnerable.

Jenrick's approach, however, is not rigid or doctrinaire. His social realism carries a degree of Dostoevskian complexity, akin to the moral ambiguities found in the works of the Russian novelist. Much like Fyodor Dostoevsky, Jenrick understands that the human person is more than the sum of their beliefs or political affiliations.

This appreciation for the complexity of the human condition is precisely what makes Jenrick's brand of conservatism stand out. In an era of tribalism and simplistic binaries, Jenrick resists the temptation to reduce human beings to mere categories, recognizing instead that each individual's dignity must be upheld in all its complexity.

As Housing Minister, Jenrick demonstrated his commitment to empowering local authorities by devolving planning powers to ensure that communities have a say in their own development. His support for ending the practice of parachuting candidates into safe seats further reflects his belief in localism. He understands that representation should be rooted in local connection, a departure from the top-down technocratic approach that often alienates voters from their representatives.

In an increasingly fragmented political landscape, Robert Jenrick's social realism offers a vision for Britain's future grounded in the belief of individual dignity. Guided by Judaeo-Christian principles, Jenrick's leadership embodies the best of conservatism's intellectual and moral traditions.

His vision for Britain is one where beauty and human dignity are not just abstract ideals but are reflected in the very fabric of society—from the homes built to the policies that govern our daily lives. By balancing philosophical depth with pragmatic action, Jenrick offers a vision of leadership that is both serious and humanistic.