



KNOWLEDGE VS BEAUTY

Please refer to attached images (downloadable at bottom of this page)

Looking

- ✓ Is this a colourful picture?
- ✓ Why is he naked?
- ✓ Is his body more like the rock to his left or the triangle to his right?
- ✓ How many objects are in this picture?
- ✓ What is the oldest thing in the picture?
- ✓ What is the youngest thing in the picture?

THINKING

Starter Question: Rock; Triangle; Human. Which is the most natural?

Questions to take you further

- ✓ What do we mean when we say 'it's natural' or 'it's unnatural'.
- ✓ Is everything natural?
- ✓ What if this was the first triangle ever drawn, would that change how natural it is?
- ✓ If the man is using the rock as a chair then does that change how natural it is?

DOING

Highlight a square space in the top right corner of the painting where the black sky is (see attached image). This can either be done on paper or on the board.

Doing Question: Can you draw something unnatural in this space?

STORY

William Blake thought nature contained life's biggest rewards however he thought that its beauty could be missed if seen through the eyes of a scientist. For Blake the scientist reduces that which is wondrous and alive down to numbers and shapes so as to make it understandable and in doing so emptying it of its power and diminishing one's own spontaneity. Here Blake paints Newton with his gaze transfixed on the paper, abiding by the strict movement of the compass whilst oblivious to the colourful rock behind him. "Art is the Tree of Life. Science is the Tree of Death" says Blake.

THINKING

Starter Question: Is Blake right that that art is the tree of life and science is the tree of death?

Questions to take you further

- ✓ Do things become less beautiful if you understand them? (e.g. people, stars, birds).
- ✓ Are there something's it's best not to learn?
- ✓ Is there something that you know that if you were to unlearn it your life would be better?
- ✓ Is it dangerous to try and understand nature?

Further Reading:

Isaiah Berlin on Romanticism.

Mary Midgley, Science and Poetry.