

sciences, but also of those concerned with human life, both in society and in individuals, to emphasise and exaggerate any and every new relation which has been discovered and found to obtain in restricted regions, facts, or events. And this is especially the case where such relations are simple and mathematically definable. When the law of gravitation was established by observation and calculation of cosmic phenomena, a tendency at once arose to generalise these simple relations and to find in a comprehensive formula of Attraction the key which would unlock the secret of the physical world.

Similar generalisations have since been propounded as the simple relations contained in vibratory motion, or in the fixed proportions of chemical combinations, have become established. In more recent times, statistical regularity, vortex motion, and biological formulæ, such as that of natural selection and that of crowding out, have ruled supreme in various branches of physical and social science. All these, and many other discoveries of arithmetical or geometrical regularity, have been at one time or another extolled as fundamental principles and their general usefulness vastly exaggerated. They have nearly all proved to be one-sided, frequently incorrect, and in consequence misleading. For a time indeed they were all extremely fruitful in extending natural knowledge; but like a fertilising river if spread over too large an area, they have dried up and ceased to be vitalising principles.