

But such is not the case with the formulæ which we call the Laws of Nature. These are merely an expression of the behaviour of things natural. They do not exist anywhere in the outer world separately or apart from the things and occurrences themselves to which they refer. They may indeed be stated in the abstract as so many relations which are to be found uniformly between things or events, but their independent existence is merely one of thought, and in their complexity and totality they constitute one of the realities which the human mind projects as it were out of itself, mainly because they are recognised by all persons competent to understand them.

So far as they can be stated precisely they form a department of applied mathematics.

It is therefore more correct to speak of the uniformity of nature, or of the nature of things, than of the Laws of Nature.

It must also be noted that these so-called Laws of Nature, or more correctly speaking, these uniform relations or rules of the behaviour of things, are not really known.

Being abstractions which the human mind makes in observing and contemplating things and events, they come to our knowledge after the behaviour of things has been observed and studied, whereas the command of a personal authority, or the enactment of written laws, must be known before the behaviour of individuals or of societies can be regulated.