

## Nature in *Piers Plowman*: In its Relation to Man (1)<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

The word denoting ‘nature’ in *Piers Plowman* is *kynde* (also spelt as *kinde*), and Langland uses it in a range of ways both as a noun and as an adjective, which is a much more diversified and expanded use than for the Old English equivalents, *cynd(e)* or *gecynd(e)*.<sup>2</sup> Langland’s use of *kynde* in *Piers Plowman* is highly significant, since it suggests how the word has come to be used in a more general sense of ‘the universe / creation’ and ‘natural physical phenomena’ (*MED*, ‘kīnd(e)’, 7)<sup>3</sup>, as Chaucer uses the word in this sense in his *House of Fame* (‘O God, that madest *kynde*, / Shal I noon other weyes dye?’; ll. 584-85).<sup>4</sup> Langland’s use of the word also suggests how it came to acquire the meaning of ‘benevolent or kind’

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<sup>2</sup> According to the *Dictionary of Old English* (Univ. of Toronto, 2008), *gecynd* has the following meanings: nature, native constitution; innate disposition; the nature of God; the established order of things; natural condition; natural property; sex; genitals; way, manner, fashion; menstruation; species; race; offspring; family; generation; people; natural right; birthday. Old English *cynd* has the following meanings: native constitution; the nature of God; natural qualities; species; race; social class; child.

<sup>3</sup> *Middle English Dictionary* is abbreviated to *MED*, and *The Dictionary of Old English* to *DOE*, and Middle English to ME.

<sup>4</sup> John Fisher, (ed.), *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1989). Italics are used to give emphasis, and all the italics in the paper are mine.

(*MED*, 'kīnd(e)', 5) in the ME period. Neither of these meanings are found in its ancestral *cynd(e)* / *gecynd(e)*. Much debate has already been ensued concerning Langland's use of 'Kynde' as a synonym of God. Though unprecedented in earlier literature, his use of it is explicable from the story depicting the salvation history of Jesus Christ, where the protagonist Piers himself transforms his figure from ploughman, through a seeker after truth, an evangelist, a prophet, a pope, Adam and to Christ in successive visions. In this context, human 'nature' is seen to be elevated to a divine level, signifying 'the nature of God' (*MED*, 'kīnd(e)', 1), with human and divine 'nature' being unified into a single concept by the word *kynde*.

The earliest example of the word with the meaning of 'the universe / creation' listed in the *MED* is from the *Wycliffite Bible* in the 1380s, whilst the earliest adjectival use with the meaning of 'benevolent / kind' is recorded in the 1330s, which we still use as the main meaning of the adjective *kind* today. In the following paper, I shall try to show some of the process by which, 1) *kynde* came to be used in the sense of 'the universe / creation / natural physical phenomena' as a noun in the 1300s, and 2) *kynde* has come to acquire the meaning of 'benevolent / kind' as an adjective.<sup>5</sup> In clarifying these processes, I hope to show the way in which Langland saw 'nature'—divine as well as human 'nature' and the created world—in its relation to man.

### **I. The Influence of St. Augustine's Concept of Nature on *Piers Plowman***

That Langland is influenced by St. Augustine's doctrine is clearly shown by mention of his name in the text (eg. Anima's mention of 'Austyn' in B.15.37)<sup>6</sup>. Langland's description of the self-propagating natural world shown by 'Kynde', as well as his description of the allegorical landscapes described in the Prologue, *passus* 1<sup>7</sup> and the

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Joseph S. Wittig (ed.), *Piers Plowman: Concordance* (The Athlone Press, 2001) is consulted.

<sup>6</sup> 'B.15.37' means B-text, *passus* 15, line 37. Quotations from *Piers Plowman* are from A. V. C. Schmidt (ed.), *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions* (Longman, 1995), and B-text is used unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>7</sup> *Passus* is a Latin word meaning 'step'. Langland uses it in the meaning of

Epilogue, suggests the concept of nature propounded by St. Augustine. St. Augustine says that the invisible power of God enters the human mind through God's creations, by the workings of the human senses. Citing the Bible, he says that 'the invisible things of God are understood and seen through the things which are made (Rom. 1:20)',<sup>8</sup> which means that every created being bears the imprint of the Creator. In this view, the human mind functions as a kind of recipient of the workings of heaven and earth and all things in them. 'All physical evidence is reported to the mind', as Augustine says,<sup>9</sup> which then forms their image there. The world of Nature (= *Kynde*), then, is a kind of projection or mirror of what is occurring in the mind, both human as well as divine. In this mechanism of sense-perception, the three realms, which are generally considered to be existing—God, man and the created world—are taken to be just different phases of what is occurring in the human mind, and there is no division between the three realms. The word denoting *kynde*, thus, holds a key to the understanding of the external physical world.

The human 'mind' is an embodiment of human 'nature' or 'essence', which according to St. Augustine, is used in two senses: one is the natural self with which man was first created, and the other is the fallen state of man, who was born under the penalty of the Original Sin, which has altered human nature. St. Augustine explains that human 'nature' is altered and made to subject to 'all the process of decay which we see and feel, and consequently to death'.<sup>10</sup> In other words, man has two natures, one is 'divine and good' and the other 'corporeal and bad'. These two senses of human 'nature', or more appropriately man's 'two natures' produce the two kinds of natural world, which will be shown in the following sections, II and III. The goodness and the complete beauty of His creation is spoilt, directly or indirectly, by sinful human beings and their actual existence. Also, the goodness of creation is deteriorated, when

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'Song'.

<sup>8</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford World Classics, 1991), X. vi, (9) (10).

<sup>9</sup> The quotation is from *Confessions*, X. vi, (9).

<sup>10</sup> See H. Betterson, (trans.), *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans* (Penguin, 1972). The Latin original text is consulted: *De Civitate Dei* Lib. XIV, Caput 12 (Turnout: Brespols, 2003), where he writes about the corruption of human nature by the Original Sin.

it is comprehended through the perception of human senses. The word *kynde* / *Kynde*, denoting ‘the inborn nature’ or ‘the natural disposition of man’ (*MED*, 2), and ‘the physical world; natural physical phenomena’ (*MED*, 7a) is particularly important, in defining the ‘nature’ of *Piers Plowman* in its relation to man.

## II. The Natural World as Affected by Human Sin

The natural phenomena surrounding human beings are closely associated with human *kynde* in *Piers Plowman*. It is so from the very beginning of the poem: the landscape shown in the Prologue and repeated in the second *passus* is an allegorical landscape of a three-fold vision of judgment familiar to the medieval mind—heaven, this world and hell, symbolically represented by a tower on a sunny hill facing eastward, a fair field full of people gathered from all orders of the society, and a dungeon placed in a dark valley:

As I biheeld into the eest an heigh to the sonne,  
 I seið a tour on a toft trieliche ymaked,  
 A deep dale byneþe, a dongeon þerinne,  
 Wiþ depe diches and derke and dredfulle of siðte.  
 A fair feeld ful of folk fond I þer bitwene—  
 Of alle manere of men, þe meene and þe riche,  
 Werchyng and wandryng as þe world askeþ. (Prol. 13-19)

It is a typical Christian allegorical landscape of *contemptus mundi*, in which man’s present life is considered to have no value, due to his ‘nature’ blemished by sin.

The natural phenomena, such as natural disasters and calamities are taken to be the consequences of the Original Sin, and ‘the wrath of God’. In B.5 and B.6, the earth fails to provide sustenance for people who fall into sins, and crop-failures are indeed taken as closely related to man’s sinful deeds.<sup>11</sup> Reason preaches to the gathered people that natural

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<sup>11</sup> A. V. C. Schmidt has already pointed out that man’s sinful deeds could be the cause of natural disasters. ‘The Inner Dreams in *Piers Plowman*’, *Medium Ævum*, 55 (1986), p. 34.

disasters—crop-failures, the spread of epidemics, trees blown down and their roots upturned by strong gusts of wind—are brought about by human sin:

He preued þat þise pestilences was for pure synne,  
 And þe south-west wynd on Saterdag at euen  
 Was pertliche for pride and for no point ellis.  
 Pyries and plum-trees were puffed to þe erþe  
 In ensample, [segges, þat ye] sholden do the bettere.  
 Beches and brode okes were blowen to the grounde  
 And turned vpward here tail in tokenynge of drede  
 That dedly synne er domesday shal fordoon hem alle. (B.5.13-20)

Thus, the allegorical figures representing the Seven Deadly Sins become repentant of their sins, and set out on a pilgrimage in *passus* 5. If crop-failure is caused by human sin, famine is caused by the idlers' rejection of honest labour. In the end of *passus* 6, the narrator gives a warning to all working men that there is going to be a widespread famine in the near future, unless they honestly work by the sweat of their brows. Before this warning of the narrator's, Hunger (= physical needs) urges labour, demanding a great deal of food from Piers, to whom the poor people present the crops they have gathered. After Hunger has gone to sleep, working men, seized suddenly with inertia, became unwilling to work hard:

For Hunger hiderward hasteþ hym faste!  
 He shal awake [þoruṣ] water, wastours to chaste,  
 Er fyue yer be fulfilled swich famyn shal aryse:  
 Thoruṣ flodes and þoruṣ foule wedres, fruytes shul faille—  
 And so seiþ Saturne and sente yow to warne: (B.6.319-24)

The narrator's apocalyptic warning is the consequence of these people's rejection of harvesting with honest labour. The metaphorical meaning of crop failures is seen to express the situation, in which one's mind is encroached upon by all forms of deception and falsity. This situation arises in *passus* 20, where Antichrist, who literally means 'the enemy of Christ' and symbolizes 'deception' and 'moral degeneracy', uproots the

crop of truth and leaves it lying there upturned. The action of Antichrist is allegorically shown by using the figure of upturned crops, as he hacks away Truth, to allow falsity to grow and establish Antichrist's rule over everyone:

In ech a contree þer he [= Antichrist] came he kutte away truþe,  
And gerte gile growe þere as he a god weere ... (B.20.56-57)

In the cosmic battle between Antichrist and his followers (vices) and the Christians (virtues), *Kynde* assaults Will and destroys many people, bringing death and its harbingers—various diseases and the symptoms of ageing. It seems quite astounding that the life-giving and benevolent *Kynde* in *passus* 9 and 11, turns up as such a figure of destruction in the Epilogue. However, it is more appropriate for Will in the end, to undergo the effect of the natural cycle of human life—birth, growth, ageing and death, as Will's journey in search of Truth (= God) ends up in failure. Death is a symbol of the Original Sin, as one of the personified abstractions argues why the descendants of Adam and Eve have to suffer the same penalty, death, because of the sin these two have committed:

That bi[w]iled þe woman and þe [wye] after,  
Thoru3 whiche wiles and wordes þei wente to helle,  
And al hir seed for hir synne þe same deep suffrede? (B.10.108-10)

### III. The Natural World as God's Creation

In contrast to the disastrous natural phenomena that are consequence of 'the wrath of God', a self-perpetuating energy, a fecundity of animals and birds of the natural world are shown in the vision of the Middle Earth, which contains a personified *Kynde*, who takes Will to a mountain called Middle Earth, and from there Will sees this wondrous natural world, where beasts and birds engage in 'feeding, mating, home-making, sexuality and reproduction'. Lying side by side with these animals is the dubious existence of human beings, whose 'unnatural' waywardness makes a good contrast to natural procreation of animals. *Kynde* here means 'natural order' which has been developed from its ancestral Old English *gecynd* denoting 'nature. The established order of things' (*DOE*,

‘gecynd’ 2) gives His creation form and order. Indeed it is Kynde who teaches animals the natural instinct to procreate for the preservation of the species:

Bote Kynde þat contreuede hit furst of his corteuse wille.  
 He tauhte þe tortle to trede, the pocok to cauke,  
 And Adam and Eue and alle othere bestes  
 A cantel of kynde wyt here kynde to saue. (C.14.160-63)

While Kynde is stationed outside the natural world, Reason appears from within as a figure governing and shaping the created beings there. This Reason is of Latin origin, and denotes ‘a guiding principle’ (*OLD*, ‘ratio’, 11), ‘the ruling principle (of natural forces, etc.)’, and ‘law (of nature)’, as is defined by the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.<sup>12</sup> Its Latin derivation is made clear in B.15.28, where Anima mentions the Latin Racio as one of his name: ‘Thanne is Racio my riȝt name, “Reson” on Englissh,’ (B.15.28).

In this world of Nature (= Kynde), the sinfulness of human beings, though distinguished from other creatures as ‘irrational’, is still admitted within Kynde’s arrangement. Whereas the animals, with their natural instinct of procreation, are ideally described, the sufferings of human beings, such as poverty, war and misery, bring disharmony to the otherwise peaceful animal kingdom. Will sees Reason keeping watch and ward over animals, but not over human beings. The implication here is that animals are ruled by ‘reason’ and thus are ‘rational’, while human beings lack the power of reason, and thus are ‘irrational’.<sup>13</sup> Although this situation is the reverse of what has generally been considered: human

<sup>12</sup> P. G. W. Glare (ed.), *The Oxford Latin Dictionary (OLD)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> There are divided opinions as to the reading of Reson in the vision of the Middle Earth. John Alford says that both animals and men have share of reason, while Derek Pearsall says that ‘man alone has the power of reason’. See John Alford, ‘The Idea of Reason in *Piers Plowman*,’ Donald Kennedy, R. A. Waldron and Joseph Wittig, (ed.), *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. 195-215; Derek Pearsall, (ed.), *Piers Plowman by William Langland: An Edition of the C-text* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1978), p. 230.

reason and animal instinct, the reader is led here to understand that the procreative instinct of animals is good, which is ‘natural’ as originally so planned and created by God. Animals are following the ‘law of nature’ as defined by Ulpian, one of the widely read authors in the days of Langland: ‘*ius naturale est quod natura ominia animalia docuit*’ [The law of nature is that law which nature teaches to all animals].<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the reason with which man is endowed, has become corrupt, which brings about the flawed nature of man, ‘whose lot is to suffer the distress of fleshly and diabolic temptation’ (B.11.398-99).<sup>15</sup> Reason attributes human sufferings to man’s inborn *kynde*:

For man was maad of swich a matere he may noȝt wel asterte  
That som tyme hym bitit to folwen his *kynde*. (B.11.400-1)

Though being defective, man’s *kynde* still belongs to the ‘nature’ which God first created. Man’s *kynde* is part of ‘the natural order of things’ (= *natura*), as St. Augustine says: ‘quod nisi in *natura* non potest esse: sed in *ea*, quam creauit ex nihilo, ...’ [it cannot exist except in a *nature*. But it can only exist in a *nature* which God created out of nothing].<sup>16</sup> The ‘law of nature / *kynde*’ as denoted by Reason allows sin to exist in the natural world, as he explains to Will the suffering of himself and of God who, permissively endures and lets man sin as he does. Responding to Will, who blames him for not attending man to save them from mishaps, Reason reproaches Will’s impatience, saying, ‘Think of God’s patience! Keep a good control of your tongue’.

‘Who suffreþ moore þan God?’ quod he; ‘no gome, as I leue.  
He myȝte amende in a minute while al þat mysstandeþ,  
Ac he suffreþ for som mannes goode, and so is oure bettre’. (B.11.379-81)

<sup>14</sup> The modern English translation is from Thomas Collett Sandars, *The Institutes of Justinian* (London, 1962), 7.

<sup>15</sup> The modern English rendering of *Piers Plowman*, B-text is from A. V. C. Schmidt’s edition, *Piers Plowman* (Oxford World’s Classics, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> *De Civitate Dei* Lib. XIV, Caput 11. The modern English translation is from H. Betterson’s edition.

Will's arrogant and argumentative way of speech, shows his failings as a human being.

Since man is fallen from his God-given natural self into the Original Sin, human *kynde*, human 'nature' is irreparably flawed. Still, in the world which is governed by Reason, and which has Kynde as God, man's sinfulness is condoned as part of its 'natural order' so long as he controls his failings.

The 'natural' attains to a very close approximation to the 'divine', to merciful God, who provides man and animals alike with 'life' and 'natural disposition', and who is born with human flesh, to experience human sufferings and sin.<sup>17</sup> It is in this conjunction that *kynde* is deified in *Piers Plowman*. We see the personified Kynde forming the body and the soul of man in B.9, and appearing as a figure responsible for the arrangement of the natural world in B.11. The significance of Kynde in each occasion will be described in more detail.<sup>18</sup> These three sequences in which Kynde appears as God will briefly be looked at. The first sequence is found in B.9, where Kynde makes a castle called *Caro* signifying man's body made up of the four elements of (earth, air, wind and water). He puts inside it his own daughter, whose name is Anima denoting 'Soul', and she is entrusted to Do-well. Here Kynde is not only the creator of every created being in the world, but the creator of the body and soul of man. It is in this sequence that *Kynde* is described as 'God' by one of the characters, Wit, who equates Kynde with God. In answering the protagonist's question of who Kynde is, Wit answers him: "Kynde þat is þe grete God" (B.9.26-28). The second Kynde sequence is found in the vision of the Middle Earth described in B.11 (see above). Kynde in the equivalent place in the C-text is identified with 'love and life that lasts without end'.<sup>19</sup> The third and the final scene where Kynde appears is the

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<sup>17</sup> A different view is put forward by Nicolette Zeeman, that *kynde* means 'lack' in the natural order and human experience. 'The Condition of Kynde', David Aers ed., *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall* (D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> As to the meaning of Kynde in the C-text, G. D. Economou says, 'the *Kynde* denotes God as creator, but it also means created nature'. *William Langland, Piers Plowman: The C Version* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 243.

<sup>19</sup> 'loue and lyf þat last withouten ende', C.10.169.

final *passus*, in which Kynde, together with other destructive forces such as Death and Old Age, assaults Will and other living creatures and tries to destroy everyone on earth. Even though the ‘K’ is not capitalized, *kynde* is obviously used with the meaning of God, or God’s representative in the passage where Patience explains to Hawkin how God sustains man and animals alike if they keep to the law of moderation—the law which decrees that every living creature should consume a moderate amount of food and drink. Patience explains to Hawkin that *kynde* itself could not allow that there is no recompense for the poor people:

But God sente hem som tyme som manere ioye  
 Ouþer here or elliswhere, *kynde* wolde it nere; (B.14.118-19)

Here, *kynde* (= nature) appears to be a proxy for God, or God himself.

To be certain, what is seen in the world of Kynde in B.11, is a reflection of the world of God’s original creation, and a reflection of nature, which ‘the Creator begot out of himself, as he begot the World through whom all things were made’. In Langland’s understanding, the nature created by God is and must be fundamentally and in essence good. The very way we use the word *kynde* seems to affirm that this is so.<sup>20</sup> Human ‘nature’, on the other hand, though redeemed by the Atonement, and for all man’s efforts to attain the perfection of his soul, cannot get out of its fallen status. For all the defective ‘nature’, human beings are integrated into the natural order of creation, as decreed by God. The ‘deification’ of nature however, becomes firmly established, in *Piers Plowman*, which depicts the history of salvation acted out by Piers, and human and divine ‘nature’ is coalesced in the body of Christ through the Incarnation.

#### IV. The Deification of Kynde<sup>21</sup>

The process by which the author realizes the divinization of *kynde* is

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<sup>20</sup>A. V. C. Schmidt, ‘The Inner Dreams in *Piers Plowman*’, *Medium Ævum*, 55 (1986), p. 36.

<sup>21</sup>H. White discusses this issue in detail in *Nature and Salvation in Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988).

well attested in B.16-19, which moves from the Old Law to the New Law, and describes the Incarnation, the Passion and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We see, in the drama describing the life of Jesus Christ, the word *kynde* carry the meanings of both human and divine. In B.17, while walking with the personified figure Hope, Will encounters a Samaritan, who tells him about the divine nature inherent in man's character. He explains that man was created in the image of God, and divinity is retained even after the Fall. Explaining the image of the Trinity through the parable of a fist, a palm, and fingers, the Samaritan says that man, as the image of the Trinity and of God, shares the 'essence' (= *kynde*) of the divine. He says that *being kind* or *kindness* is the very 'nature' of God, and that an act of *unkindness* quenches the grace of the Holy Ghost. Man's 'benevolent' (= *kynde*) nature, which God has created, is destroyed by his 'cruel' (= *unkynde*) behaviour.

'Thus is vnkyndenesse þe contrarie þat quencheth, as it were,  
The grace of þe Holy Goost, Goddes owene kynde.  
For þat kynde dooþ, vnkynde fordoop—as þise corsede þeues'.

(B.17.271-73)

The implication here is that man is so made, with an inherent character, that he should avoid 'unkyndenesse', which works as a moral principle of 'the law of *kynde*'. The passage also suggests why the word *kynde* denoting 'nature' has come to be used in the sense of 'kind' or 'benevolent'.

In B.18, the *passus* coming after the Samaritan, the meaning of the adjective *kynde* approaches more and more to 'merciful', as Christ becomes 'man's bloody brother' (B.18.376-77). Will sees in his dream, Jesus going to joust in Piers' coat of arms, and the scene of the Passion, enacted by Jesus = Piers. God's experiences of human sufferings and sins, through Jesus' coming to earth in human form, are recounted by Peace who comes together with her sister Mercy. Peace says that 'God put himself at risk, by taking the adventure of assuming Adam's humanity'.

'Forþi God, of his goodnesse, þe firste gome Adam,  
Sette hym in solace and in souereyn murþe;

And siþþe he suffred hym synne, sorwe to feele—  
 To wite what wele was, kyndeliche to knowe it,  
 And after, God auntede hymself and took Adames *kynde*  
 To wite what he haþ suffred in þre sondry places,  
 Boþe in heuene and in erþe—and now til helle he þenkeþ,  
 To wite what alle wo is, þat woot of alle ioye'. (B.18.217-24)

The scene in which Jesus assumes human nature is shown more vividly in the beginning of B.19, where Piers Plowman becomes blood covered Jesus Christ in the Passion scene. It occurs in Will's dream, where Piers Plowman appears stained all with blood, while carrying a cross:

..... and sodeynly me mette  
 That Piers þe Plowman was peynted al bloody,  
 And com in wiþ a cros before the comune peple,  
 And riȝt lik in alle lymes to Oure Lord Iesu. (B.19.5-8)

We see in the episode of the 'Harrowing of Hell' described in B.18, one of the reasons why the word 'Kynde' is used to refer to God. In that episode, Christ in hell, invoking the idea of 'kyndeness', shows mercy to release mankind from there. He explains to those whom he finds there that he would be an 'unnatural king' [= unkynde kyng], if he didn't save mankind, his kindred, which suggests that the 'natural' is a quality inherent with mercy and the saving of mankind as God, as Christ says:

'Ac my rightwisnesse and right shal ruled al helle,  
 And mercy al mankynde bifore me in heuene.  
 For *I were an vnkynde kyng but I my kyn holpe—*  
 And nameliche at swich a nede þer nedes help bihoueþ' (B.18.397-400)

The adjective *kynde*, on the other hand, has acquired the more Christian element of 'charity', expanding the already existing meaning of 'affection naturally arising among one's blood-kins', which is presumably derived from definitions meaning blood-relationship, as in 'species; race; offspring; family' in the Old English *cynd(e)* or *gecynd(e)*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 'Having normal affections or disposition well-disposed towards one's kin'

## V. Conclusion

In *Piers Plowman*, both the divine and human ‘natures’ are unified in the drama of the Incarnation, the Passion and the Atonement, which are acted out by the protagonist Piers, and *kynde* has come to signify this unified concept. The two kinds of descriptions of the physical world—allegorical landscapes and the self-propagating natural world—are reflections of the ‘divine’ and ‘corporeal’ human ‘natures’, which can be described as ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ / ‘sinless’ and ‘fallen’. They mirror the divine and human mind: the landscapes described in the Prologue and the following visions are closely associated with human *kynde* and sins, while the vision of Kynde is a reflection of God’s mind. The defective human ‘nature’ is accepted by the natural order and the ruling principle of the natural world, which are denoted by Kynde and Reason. ‘The physical world; natural physical phenomena’ and ‘the natural disposition of man’, both of which are denoted by the same word *kynde*, are thus closely related. Still, in the world which is governed by Reason and which has Kynde as God, man’s sinfulness is condoned as part of its ‘natural order’, so long as he controls his failings. The meaning of adjective *kynde* approaches more and more to the Christian element of ‘charity’, which is seen in the affection naturally growing among blood relations, and can be traced back to the meaning of ‘species; race; offspring; family’ in the Old English *cynd(e)* or *gecynd(e)*. The acquisition of this meaning of adjective *kynde* is made possible only by the story, in which human ‘nature’ is deified through the drama of the Incarnation, the Passion and the Atonement.

W. Langland intends *kynde* or ‘the natural’ to connote the following meanings of ‘benevolent, kind, merciful’, ‘the universe, creation, natural physical phenomena’, ‘the natural disposition of man’, ‘the nature of God’ and ‘the natural order of things’. All of these meanings serve to illustrate the relationship of man and the natural world in *Piers Plowman*.

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(MED, ‘kīnd(e)’, 4).