Philosophies in *Grendel*

Chapter One

**Orphism:** The teachings of an ancient Greek philosophical cult which exerted great influence on Greek culture, and later on Western mysticism and occultism. It began in the sixth century BC, and is attributed to the mythical Orpheus. The chief teachings are of reincarnation, a Greek version of Karma, a history of the universe which was formed by Cronus who formed an egg and created the first king of the gods -- whom Zeus supplanted and fathered Dionysus -- the divine child. Other teachings are that the body is the prison of the soul, animals were not to be killed or eaten, the good were to be rewarded while the evil were to be punished in Nether World, and teachings of self-denial and seriousness in religious matters. Apollo was the kindred god who demanded purification and righteousness. Orphism had a great impact on alchemy. *A.G.H.*

Chapter Two:

**Solipsism:** Solipsism is sometimes expressed as the view that "I am the only mind which exists," or "My mental states are the only mental states." However, the sole survivor of a nuclear holocaust might truly come to believe in either of these propositions without thereby being a solipsist. Solipsism is therefore more properly regarded as the doctrine that, in principle, "existence" means for me my existence and that of my mental states. Existence is everything that I experience -- physical objects, other people, events and processes -- anything that would commonly be regarded as a constituent of the space and time in which I coexist with others and is necessarily construed by me as part of the content of my consciousness. For the solipsist, it is not merely the case that he believes that his thoughts, experiences, and emotions are, as a matter of contingent fact, the only thoughts, experiences, and emotions. Rather, the solipsist can attach no meaning to the supposition that there could be thoughts, experiences, and emotions other than his own. In short, the true solipsist understands the word "pain," for example, to mean "my pain." He cannot accordingly conceive how this word is to be applied in any sense other than this exclusively egocentric one.

Chapter 3:

**Sophism:** A philosophy that started around the fifth century B.C. and was made famous by Plato, Aristotle, and Aristophanes. Sophists were looked down upon, by these three, as teaching anything for a price. Their teaching was practical instead of ethical and they emphasized rhetoric rather than virtue. In *The Clouds*, Aristophanes mocks the sophistry of Socrates, who is elsewhere not critiqued as a sophist. Sophism was thought capable of perverting the truth because the sophists taught students to argue any side of an issue. Despite the detractors, for a short time, sophism was well paid and regarded, and sophists held certain civic privileges.

Chapter 4:

Old Testament (the basic values of good vs. evil, vengeful God)

Chapter 5:

**Nihilism:** Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. A true nihilist would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than, perhaps, an impulse to destroy. While few philosophers would claim to be nihilists, nihilism is most often associated with Friedrich Nietzsche who argued that its corrosive effects would eventually destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions and precipitate the greatest crisis in human history. In the 20th century, nihilistic themes--epistemological failure, value destruction, and cosmic purposelessness--have preoccupied artists, social critics, and philosophers. Mid-century, for example, the existentialists helped popularize tenets of nihilism in their attempts to blunt its destructive potential. By the end of the century, existential despair as a response to nihilism gave way to an attitude of indifference, often associated with antifoundationalism.

Chapter 6:

**Ethical egoism** is the normative ethical position that moral agents ought to do what is in their own self-interest. It is important to distinguish this from psychological egoism, the claim that people can only act in their own interest. Psychological egoism is a claim about how people act, not a claim about how they ought to act. Ethical egoism is distinct from rational egoism (which holds that it is rational to act in one's self-interest) and individualism, neither of which posit that acting in one's self-interest is necessary to act in a morally right way.

Ethical egoism contrasts with ethical altruism, which holds that moral agents have an ethical obligation to help or serve others. Ethical egoism does not, however, require moral agents to disregard the well-being of others, nor does...
it require that a moral agent refrains from considering the well-being of others in moral deliberation. What is in an agent's self-interest may be incidentally detrimental to, beneficial to, or neutral in its effect on others. It allows for the possibility of either as long as what is chosen is efficacious in satisfying self-interest of the agent.

Ethical egoism is sometimes the philosophical basis for people's support of libertarianism or anarchism, political positions based partly on a belief that individuals should not coercively prevent others from exercising freedom of action.

Chapter 7:
Skepticism (chaos) vs. New Testament (order) (basic values? forgiveness)

Chapter 8:
Machiavellianism is primarily the term some social and personality psychologists use to describe a person's tendency to deceive and manipulate others for personal gain.

Chapter 9:
Whitehead's process: The philosophy of process is a venture in metaphysics, the general theory of reality. Its concern is with what exists in the world and with the terms of reference in which this reality is to be understood and explained. The task of metaphysics is, after all, to provide a cogent and plausible account of the nature of reality at the broadest, most synoptic and comprehensive level. And it is to this mission of enabling us to characterize, describe, clarify and explain the most general features of the real that process philosophy addresses itself in its own characteristic way. The guiding idea of its approach is that natural existence consists in and is best understood in terms of processes rather than things -- of modes of change rather than fixed stabilities. For processists, change of every sort -- physical, organic, psychological -- is the pervasive and predominant feature of the real.

Chapter 10:
Nietzsche: Nietzsche's style, and his radical questioning of the value and objectivity of truth, raise considerable problems of interpretation, generating an extensive secondary literature in both continental and analytic philosophy. Nonetheless, his key ideas include interpreting tragedy as an affirmation of life, an eternal recurrence that has fallen into numerous interpretations, and a reversal of Platonism. Nietzsche famously put forward the idea that "God is dead", and this death may result in radical perspectivism or may lead one to confront the fact that humans have always regarded truth perspectivally. Other Nietzschean concepts include the Übermensch (variously translated as superman, superhuman, or in the way most philosophers refer to it today, overman) and the eternal return (or eternal recurrence). Nietzsche posits the overman as a goal that humanity can achieve for itself, or that an individual can set for himself.

Chapter 11:
Existentialism: A (mostly) twentieth-century approach that emphasizes the primacy of individual existence over any presumed natural essence for human beings. Although they differ on many details, existentialists generally suppose that the fact of my existence as a human being entails both my unqualified freedom to make of myself whatever I will and the awesome responsibility of employing that freedom appropriately, without being driven by anxiety toward escaping into the inauthenticity or self-deception of any conventional set of rules for behavior, even though the entire project may turn out to be absurd. Prominent existentialists include Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers, Beauvoir, Sartre, and Camus.

Chapter 12:
Empiricism: Empiricism is a theory which holds that the origin of all knowledge is sense experience. The term also refers to the method of observation and experiment used in the natural sciences. Often, empiricism is contrasted with rationalism, a theory which holds that the mind may apprehend some truths directly, without requiring the medium of the senses.