VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

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PHILOSOPHICAL HERITAGE OF

VINCAS VYČINAS

Summary of Doctoral Dissertation
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Problem Analyzed in Dissertation

Relevance of topic comes from the importance of development of heritage of Lithuanian philosophy. Present and future evolution of philosophy cannot be detached from analysis and evaluation of thinkers from the past. Thinking of Vincas Vyčinas is worth our attention because his work is poorly integrated in philosophical discourse. The subject of the dissertation is also important because of problematic questions, which Vyčinas has brought forward. The dissertation investigates his ideas, reveals the conceptual side and originality of his thinking, and evaluates his consistency of following phenomenological philosophy. The dissertation not only highlights specific aspects that we can find both in Vyčinas' and other Lithuanian diaspora philosophers' works, but shows exceptional attention to old Lithuanian way of living and their distinctive way of thinking intrinsic to them.

The dissertation reveals, that Vyčinas is aware of Edmund Husserl's phenomenological requirement to get closer to the things themselves, in other words - search for direct encounter with phenomena that brings philosopher closer to primordial thinking. We also emphasize that Vyčinas mostly follows Heidegger, who has made the most significant impact on philosophical thinking on this Lithuanian philosopher. It is important to emphasize that Vyčinas first encountered Heidegger's ideas during Maceina's lectures at Vytautas the Great University and after the Second World War he studied Heidegger's philosophy in Freiburg. Although Vyčinas follows Heidegger's ideas very closely, the dissertation tries to highlight the independent aspects of Vyčinas thinking, and to explore his departure from Heidegger's way by focusing on mythopoetical discourse of ancient cultures. In this dissertation we show that Vyčinas turns to mythopoetical thinking because he wants to break free from Western technical stereotypes and also to reanimate philosophy, to reveal its primordial nature.

The dissertation's aim is to find an originality of Vyčinas ideas and to emphasize his distinctive way of thinking. It is precisely this aspect that makes our

research complicated, because mythical thinking is not considered coherent by philosophical discourse. These circumstances require additional analyses of mythical thinking, a discussion of its relation with scientific thinking and its presence in ancient Greek philosophy. The dissertation tries to answer the questions whether mythical attitude is compatible with today's Western philosophy, if turning to myth does not mean refusal of philosophical thinking or turning to irrationality? Mythical discourse has different nature from Western philosophy. We emphasize that this difference helps Vyčinas to explore the limitations of pure rationality and predominance of causal logic, which brought contemporary philosophical thinking to a crisis. Vyčinas does not reject philosophy; rather, he uses an oblique approach, and he reveals suppressed philosophical potential within mythical thinking. Resultantly, an analysis of Vyčinas philosophical thinking requires extraordinary careful approach.

Vyčinas' investigation of mythical cultures has important methodological features that help him rethink the fundaments of Western philosophy. This encourages us to search for common aspects in both philosophical and mythological thinking. Science and history works with particular facts, but language of myth and poetry is universal and worldly. It expresses immediate experience and highlights the difference between scientific knowledge and direct perception. This allows us to stress the actuality of Vyčinas philosophical thinking, because the immediacy of mythical awareness can be intertwined with theoretical.

A reason as to why Vyčinas is focused on mythical thinking, discussed in the dissertation showing that Western philosophy became overly attached to sciences and lost its sovereignty. For Vyčinas we must avoid constructed scientific experience and search for direct contact with the world. We explore his claim that technical scientific thinking cannot be isolated from individual's attempt to articulate his meaning and place in the world. This claim results in an important attempt to describe fundaments of thinking that can withstand technical scientific and cosmopolitan globalization, presenting major challenges to contemporary humanity.

Also it is important to emphasize that Vyčinas' attempt to revive mythical

thinking into today's Western culture is coming from his personal experience of mythical culture in Lithuania. In other words, his attempts to bring to light the world of mythology is rooted in a substratum, which has survived in Lithuania countryside together with mythical tradition that was devoted to reverence of nature up to middle of XX century. Living experience of old Lithuanian community for Vyčinas is important as a model of the living world, which helps to have orientation in the contemporary culture. This also accounts for his attitude and ability to perceive the world as a whole integral universe, as a harmonious totality. We emphasize that memories of lost communal life world has an impact on Vyčinas late philosophy and his turn to explorations of old mythical Lithuanian cultural heritage.

Concerned about survival of Lithuanian identity in culturally globalized world, Vyčinas tries to develop his thinking in accord with old Lithuanian way of living. The dissertation is devoted to reveal his efforts to explore Lithuanian and Baltic traditions. The dissertation tries to show that in the context of Lithuanian philosophy Vyčinas' works can be considered close to those written by Antanas Maceina, Algis Mickūnas, Algirdas Julius Greimas and other eminent lithuanian diaspora thinkers who, in addition, focus on the dimension of nationality. In this context, the dissertation reveals the importance of Vyčinas way of thinking to Lithuanian philosophical discourse.

Tasks and targets of dissertation

Main target of this dissertation is to analyze Vyčinas philosophical heritage from various aspects, describe his methods and reveal the originality of his thinking. An important task is to explain Vyčinas philosophical attitudes, and highlight the significance of his ideas in the context of Western philosophical discourse. The dissertation explores different stages of Vyčinas works in order to:

- Show the impact of Heidegger's ideas on Vyčinas thinking;

- Analyze most important philosophical concepts of Vyčinas;

- Investigate fundament problems of philosophy raised by Vyčinas;

- Analyze Vyčinas' study of evolution of Western thinking;

- Explore interaction of mythical and scientific discourses;

- Describe the importance of mythological research in Vyčinas works;

- Discuss the significance of old Lithuanian way of living in Vyčinas works;

- Investigate the issues of individual self-perception in Vyčinas works;

- Highlight the distinctiveness of philosophical thinking of Vyčinas;

Scientific novelty of dissertation

Since there are no works dedicated to exploration of Vyčinas' philosophy, neither in Lithuania nor in the other countries, the dissertation is original. We can find some fragmentary references to Vyčinas' works in thesis available in Lithuania and in other countries, but they are only first steps in this direction. Regarding international acknowledgement of Vyčinas, it is important to note that usually he is mentioned only as an interpreter of Heidegger. In contrast, we are trying to highlight the distinctiveness of Vyčinas' thinking, which is usually overlooked or disregarded. Attempts to spotlight the philosophy of Vyčinas, to introduce it to hermeneutical discourse of Lithuanian philosophy, to provide the foundations for further and deeper study of his philosophy, were made available to the public to the extent that parts of the dissertation were presented in the following formats: In 2010 at conference on "Existentialism and relevance of fundamental ontology" (thesis on *Concept of the Fourth in Heidegger's and Vyčinas' philosophy*); In 2011 at conference on "Existentialism Ideas of the twentieth century in humanities and arts" (thesis on D*evelopment of Heidegger's ideas in Vyčinas philosophy*); In 2012 at conference on "East-West: Comparative Studies XII" (thesis on *Relations between studies of Uždavinys' and Vyčinas'*). The work of Vyčinas' *Search for Gods* was translated also during preparation of this dissertation in 2009. In the same year it has been published as the third volume of his writing.

Methods used in dissertation

In order to define the most important aspects of Vyčinas philosophy and

review them from different points of view, the dissertation discusses the most significant of his concepts, and highlights his fundamental positions and assumptions. The dissertation is based on phenomenological descriptions of experience, hermeneutical interpretations of texts, and also analytical approach. Research strategies and methods have been chosen in order to properly reveal complicated and not traditional philosophy of Vyčinas, and explore most important statements and philosophical ideas of the philosopher. The dissertation is essentially comparative, because Vyčinas' texts are compared with Heidegger's works. Development of specific targets and objectives in separate parts of the thesis also employs not yet mentioned principles of intuition, which is partly based on the approach dictated by the problem of myth itself.

It has to be noted that Vyčinas philosophical work requires specific hermeneutical access, and an ability to penetrate his world of categories and ideas. Vyčinas' attitude is sincere, and can even be called naive, not in the strict sense of the word, but in terms of openness. This is partially due to his personal life experience and his effort of avoiding analytical and speculative systems. Therefore too rational and strict examination of Vyčinas philosophy can unduly impoverish it because of the loss of important mythopoetical assumptions coming from mythical depth of his culture. He employs forgotten rudiments of old mythical traditions, allowing him to stretch the limits of Western philosophical discourse. This is why too critical scientific analysis of his works would also be counterproductive; it would distort philosophical heritage of this thinker instead of opening access to its in-depth exploration. It is important to accept Vyčinas thinking also emphatically, to discover the identity of Vyčinas thought, to trace specific nuances of his philosophy, to find its principles, and its positions, all the while avoiding analytical burdens that might overlook the essence of his philosophy.

Most important results of dissertation

Method of Vyčinas

Vyčinas' works draw the reader into original world of a thinker. Vyčinas is exploring his ideas not only in rational space of language; he uses empathy, feeling

and intuition that cannot fit into the strict logical frames. He tries to break free from the restrictions of schematics and methods of science that dominates Western philosophical discourse. We can find a lot of non-philosophical and scientifically unverified content in his works. It is not possible to prove his ideas theoretically, but we also cannot say that Vyčinas attitude is not philosophical. He avoids artificially created or abstract thinking, his attitude can be considered natural, sometimes spontaneous, based on individual rootedness in the world. Phenomenological thinking in his works arises from immediate experience of the world, leading to the possibility that his philosophy is based on references to the indivisible whole, which involves also the philosopher.

Vyčinas deliberately chooses such a strategy. He is convinced that the early Greek philosophy and modern philosophy of existentialism has mythopoetic features. This is precisely what allows him to interweave mythopoetic details into the fabric of the theoretical text and to maintain links to the transcendent phenomena. This approach helps the thinker to express something about transcendent world – what is not possible to do using a rigorous logical metaphysical way. Vyčinas intentionally avoids comprehensive scientific systems, while engaging the reader with the dynamic and multidimensional thinking, available in what he calls the primeval and mythical. This kind of thinking provides a distinctive, genuine openness and founds his phenomenological attitude and pure experience. Such thinking leads him to direct encounter with the world, prior to any theoretical proof that would correspond to rigor scientific requirements. It can be said that the development of the mythopoetical thinking for Vyčinas is a philosophical choice needed to reveal for him the grounds of primordial thinking and meaning that encompass the structures of individual being.

Dimension of mythic thinking

The myth as a tool to investigate an extinct cultures, helps to overcome the barrier of historical overlay of assumptions and reveal cultural formations which otherwise would remain closed and silent. Although myth is not a direct expression of current historical reality, it can reflect the old way of living of a society. The

myth may be considered to be cultural phenomenon of a society, because it structures a continuous tradition in a simple and understandable language, offering comprehensible interpretation of significant social events and changes. The living world explained in terms of mythopoetical language helps to perceive concrete individual and ethnic aspirations, and reveal worldly dimension that cultures maintain of the past in understandable way today.

Mythopoetical dimensions, according to Vyčinas, helps to grasp the primordial grounds of philosophical thinking. Development of the mythical thinking itself in Vyčinas works does not solve all the problems of Western cultural crisis, but this rich spiritual dimension opens up a whole that allows us to overcome the limitations of today's scientific thinking, articulate questions of meaning of human existence and reflect the place of individual in the world. It is worth noting that by rejecting the strict logic of formal methodologies, and founding his thinking on mythical dynamics, Vyčinas creates a particular attitude partially freed from the dominant Western culture of technological worldview.

Turning to mythopoetical thinking of ancient cultures can be considered as a search for alternative and an independent worldview and a form of discourse. This attitude helps Vyčinas to compare the natural and mythical thinking with an artificial modern scientific thinking. In other words, Vyčinas' research reveals limitations of modern Western culture. He uses myth as a method of reflection, capable of criticizing today's worldview and overcoming the limitations of metaphysical approach and boundaries of the Western technical way of thinking. Resultantly, he contends that Western scientific attitude is not the only one possible anymore; it can be contrasted with mythical attitude, which is considered an alternative option for a thinker to follow. In this sense, Vyčinas explores mythical compositions and investigates the ancient cultural heritage in order to understand and highlight the distinct values of the ancient world.

Although profiles of mythical thinking used by Vyčinas are not philosophically purified, his research can be considered important to philosophy. Drawing a clear line between the current technical research and the old mythical thinking, Vyčinas highlights the distinction between scientific interpretation of

nature and natural immediate perception of the world. He can emphasize that listening to scientific logical arguments reveals only the technical language itself, but mythical metaphorical talk reveals living nature of which the thinker himself is a part. Scientific requirement of accuracy and clarity of interpretation not only degrades the richness of metaphoric language, but also sets to many limitations on a living language. A reduction of the great variety of phenomena and their interrelated meaningful links to unambiguous term looses their multidimensionality and their roots in the world. Due to the required of formal discourses, the meaningful depth of phenomenon becomes excluded and the "poetics" of the world must be sacrificed. Metaphoric language discloses the ambivalence of worldly phenomena, its vitality in the context of the lived world, its affinity to the experienced things, the meaningful links between phenomena instead of the accuracy of causal logic.

The Western thinking has lost the transcendent dimension, which is based on the fact that all reality is known to science already and nothing is left unrevealed, while the essence of myth is transcendental because it allows for the unknown. In this context it is significant that for philosophy mythical thinking opens the lost transcendent dimension, which for the early Greek thinkers, especially for pre-Socratic (Heraclitus, Anaximander, Parmenides) played a significant role. Therefore according to Vyčinas, the technically oriented culture of modern West has to be enriched with a restored transcendent dimension and mythopoetical thinking. This position leads him to introduce words with metaphorical meaning (nutikimas, gyvenimas-kur, būsenos, su-pratimas, physis-yra-logos, etc.). Vyčinas is exploring the mythopoetical position and the old way of life in order to highlight the immediacy of ancient individual's relation to the world, the vividness of his self-perception and his underlying existential insights into the dramatic sense of life. While articulating metaphysical thinking, he also investigates how the old mythical cultural worldview reveals individual's place and meaningfulness in the world. So it can be said that by rejecting the dominant modern Western scientific criteria of "clear and distinct" ideas, Vyčinas tries to use mythopoetical dimension to rethink everyday living world existentially.

Vyčinas tells us that mythical figures should not be seen as inaccessible and unexperienceable, not as something that is outside the limits of the world, but can be experienced in the context of our world. He argues that transcendence in this case does not mean that gods are some other side of the world or nature. We can say that invisible gods allow humans to understand things in the world as meaningful. Therefore objects in the world reflect the essence of gods and humans; although aware of direct unknowability of gods, one discovers them through the reflections in objects. Circular structure of thinking, that encompass transcendental dimension in Vyčinas works, is not considered problematic, since for him it is an important methodical tool, capable of representing primordial grasp of the whole of the world. Transcendent contemplation is understood not as the pursuit of the world beyond human reach, but as a reflection of perception not clearly definable by the means of language". This explains the importance of metaphorical and mythical language in Vyčinas philosophy. Such language contains ambiguities providing depth of meaning and openness of transcendental phenomena to expand reflection in early stages of thinking. Therefore Vyčinas wants to emphasize that mythical thinking is productive and creative in the contemporary Western world.

Although philosophers were trying to demystify philosophical discourse from mythical thinking for a long time, after the protracted structuralist analysis of myth there reemerged an understanding that the mythopoetical form of thinking can also open avenues to meaning and truth. Greimas' structuralist approach finds meaning in mythical objects and structures, and forms a more general understanding of the depth of mythical thinking. Vyčinas' position becomes productive if we emphasize the fact that his purpose is not to return modern Western thinking to myth, but to discover a fruitful synthesis of mythopoetical and theoretical thinking. Myth has to be interpreted not metaphysically or ontologically but hermeneutically. In other words, the mythological statements about deities or heroes should be interpreted not as metaphysical or ontological entities, but as a way to interpret reality through symbolic mediators. The figurative language of myth does not refer to gods and mythical characters as entities, but opens a way to communicate the contents of deeper meanings without ontological pretension.

Vyčinas attention to mythical thinking is significant also because it supports his efforts to preserve the spirit of Lithuanian identity in globalized world. He was trying to find an acceptable way of thinking for Lithuanian community living in exile; he also wants to maintain the old way of life and to promote ethnic values. It can be argued that mythical thinking is invoked in Vyčinas' works not by accident but by design. It helps to reveal meaningful semantic dimension, which is an important factor in connecting the ethnic community and to unite it in thinking as well as in the way of living, indeed, to preserve same cultural meanings and to structure collective consciousness. Integrity of community supports precisely the mythical discourse that becomes the basis of cultural and traditional understanding of the world. He argues that myth is the source of hymns, songs and wisdom of an ethnic people; it brings existential meaning to a given community. Although Vyčinas' ideas about the recreation of ethnic mentality together with the old way of Lithuanian life in today's world are problematic, the dissertation explores these ideas without examining their feasibility, since the latter would hinder the efficiency of disclosing the position of Vyčinas.

Limitations of mythic thinking

Vyčinas' efforts to restore the mythic rituals and live by them lead in the opposite direction than all naturally emerging traditions. Mythical tradition, in order to orient individual in the world, uses narratives and cultural experience; meanwhile, modern western tradition of thinking requires believing in scientific technical worldview; but in today's Western world Vyčinas proposes to restore old mythical thinking. It is clear that even if some individuals will succeed in restoring mythical type of discourse and will follow mythic rituals, there are still many serious concerns that we have to discuss.

We must emphasize that Vyčinas explores old mythical thinking without appropriate attention to historical contexts. In other words, he do not acknowledge the impossibility of restoring same relations with nature in today's world, that thousands of years ago dominated ancient mythical traditions. It is obvious that after people had moved from small agricultural villages to the cities and

relationships with nature have changed dramatically, today natural mythical thinking can only be restored by means of artificial imitation without having any deeper meaning and continuity. However, it would make sense to learn from the old mythical thinking and enrich today's Western thinking with a help restoration of reverence for nature based on its transcendent dimension, providing richer meaning to discourses and individuals. It is not the recovery of the old way of life that is significant, but extension of today's thinking outside the modern Western limits of scientific systems. In other words, elaboration of mythical thinking can reveal that technical experience is a limited tool suitable for development of technology only, and not as a foundation of revealing the meaning of world's experience.

It is worth mentioning that mythical thinking also has limitations. Before evaluating Vyčinas' proposed way, we have to answer the question whether the mythical position can exist without imposing its own systematic requirements, without any prior assumptions and without shaping world's experience? Vyčinas agrees that it is not possible to articulate the world experience without any cultural background. Therefore myth shapes the primordial experience with a use of its own presuppositions. This raises the question whether the mythical thinking is justified philosophically? Is it possible to live in accordance with the requirements of myth's immediate or direct experience? It must be recognized that mythical performance of rituals moves away from direct encounter with a world in the same way as living in a technical world. Although myth is closer to nature, it is not closer to the essence of things than technical thinking, which is based on the scientific worldview. Obviously, between the thinker and direct experience of reality ritualized mythic system intrudes in the same way as the scientific worldview and its technical approach intrudes between thinking and reality. In other words, development of Heidegger's mythopoetical way of thinking and attempt to break free from schematics based on scientific thinking brings Vyčinas back to the system - this time not to the technical but the mythical one.

Of course, we can vindicate the position of Vyčinas, because he treats primordial thinking as a foundation of rationality that structures coherence and

meaningfulness of the world – found to be common for different civilizations. Vyčinas contends that primordial thinking comes from immediate openness of conscious individual to the world, from his lived experience, which is more intimate and more certain than the validity of causal logic. Vyčinas attempts to restore sensitive, pre-linguistic contact with the world. This, according to him, is possible through recollection of reverence for nature, leading to revival of lost meanings of the concepts of gods, showing that the theoretical static worldview of today does not really establish the answers that once and for all can explain all questions about the world without the parallels of the old natural mythic tradition. Thus our approach has to resist undue influence and domination of systematic scientific position and point out that the dissertation is based on the assumption that Vyčinas' opinion and position is just an alternative trend or direction of thinking.

Phenomenology of Vyčinas thinking

In order to understand the originality of Vyčinas thinking, we have to discuss the influence of phenomenological methodology on his works. Vyčinas stresses that the phenomenological method has changed normative attitude of philosophy to descriptive analyses of awareness. He points out that sciences impose reductionistic techniques onto reality, while phenomenology tries to reject the premises that deform the primordial experience. Please note that the theoretical requirements of phenomenology in practice are realized only in part. In terms of the phenomenological reduction, it should be noted that Husserl recognizes that full liberation of the prior assumptions is impossible, because phenomenological consciousness does not occur without intentionality, i.e. it is not self-sufficient and independent. On the other hand, the very reflection requires consciousness of individual, which will always be egological. In other words, the very concept of Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness does not let a thinker to completely achieve pure reflection.

Vyčinas make use of consciousness described by Husserl, pointing out that it can grasp phenomena not in themselves and not in the cultural context, but in a reflective way that focuses attention on consciousness itself. Husserl's

phenomenological method overcomes the distance between the content of consciousness and values in the world; therefore contact with the phenomena is treated as a world-revealing event. Phenomena themselves, given for the consciousness, are treated as the essence of experienced object. Consciousness in Vyčinas works observes itself, and this experience is considered primeaval, later articulated in language, and transformed into characters of a cultural space. In other words, Vyčinas focuses attention not on cultural symbols, not on the domain of assumptions, but on the pre-linguistic content of consciousness that can be expressed in language in a Heideggerian way.

Vyčinas does not only develop a Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, but also argues that we can grasp better the experience of the world, allowing the pre-linguistic stage to be partially recognized. He follows the strategy of leaving things completely unexplained, opening freedom for contemplating their self-expression. He develops a phenomenological openness for partial perception and multidimensionality. It can be assumed that precisely this access opens up a complexity of ancient mythical thinking. Vyčinas believes that Western metaphysics is unable to fully reveal the direct encountering with a world. Philosophical thinking, he said, has to leave the unrecognized part of experience unformed or formed only partially, thus leaving an open access to other meaningful interpretations and multidimensional understanding. We have already mentioned that completely neutral look is impossible because without experience the interpretation of the world is simply unavailable. Having this in mind, we can note that Vyčinas position has to be treated more as an aim of thinking that founds understanding of the multidimensional nature of the world.

The dissertation emphasizes that Vyčinas draws his attention not only to the phenomena, but also to the way of linguistic expression. Vyčinas tries to use language that does not "attack", capture or formalize the phenomena. His approach can open up the deepest human experience, without providing accurate information that would be appropriate to control things and the world. This explains why the causal logic often simply cannot reveal and explain Vyčinas' ideas without distorting the semantic field, which is implied in them. We can conclude that

phenomena not named by a word, in Vyčinas works, is just as important as what has already been expressed. In other words, it is assumed that the initial impression, immediate experience or intuition at the pre-linguistic level keeps alive the direct contact with the phenomena in the world. He argues that as long as a thinker remains in direct contact with the world, allows precisely the lively sight, the direct appearance of surprise, such a thinker can point to primordial experiences which background and help the individual to think and understand the world and himself philosophically.

Therefore, it should be noted that Vyčinas position helps to highlight the experience of the world at a pre-linguistic level. Primordial phenomenological presence for him is the whole, which is not clearly implicit in language and is open to creative interpretation. Vyčinas' works are based not on analytically reflective attitude, but on the phenomenological hermeneutic intuition, in other words, not on a scientific theory, but on practical and existential, primordial experience of everyday living world. Thanks to empathy, intuition and attunement Vyčinas concentrates his attention on the very threshold of understanding or even behind it on the side of primeval phenomena. In order to express his experience he employs metaphorical language. Vyčinas' thinking reveals that philosophical attitude can be based not on theoretical, speculative, methodical statements, but on pre-reflexive practical immersion into the experience of the world. Such attitude sustains philosophical thinking on something that can be treated as reliable and obvious. Therefore Vyčinas actively avoids strict statements of causal logic and leans toward contemplation of intuitive, pre-logical, even sensual experience of the world, calling this a connection between immanence of individual and transcendence of the world.

Immediate primordial presence always remain in the pre-linguistic dimension, since the usage of language cannot completely break free from prior assumptions, and because the liberation from language would deprive us of the cultural dimension which is present in verbal meanings. It is not possible to have a starting point, which is free of any assumptions; after all, any description cannot be without preconditions. Vyčinas phenomenology develops not as a universal method and the

aspiration of purity of expression of the world. It is more important for him not to break free from imposed prior assumptions of a tradition, but to follow the tradition, which, in his opinion, is a freer, more open, more humane. This is precisely what leads Vyčinas to the position that contemporary Western technical culture has to be enriched by adding to it the spiritual values of natural mythical way of thinking.

Self-perception problem of individual

Vyčinas focuses on problems of individual, pointing out, that theories, doctrines, philosophical, social, and religious systems, contemporary morality and sciences, abundant in the Western world, do not help individuals to perceive the world and themselves. He raises the question: how to get rid of the superficial chaos? How to overcome the confusion and uncertainty, how to live? Who will help the individual to understand the world today? These questions stress the importance of spiritual dimension, which is based on the question of being; the question is pushed to the limit of modern cultural world, since in the latter this question has been reduced to banal self-evidence. It is important to emphasize that an individual's self-perception is particularly important at all stages of Vyčinas' works; it pervades as if it were an ever-present background of his thinking. Though not always, this problem appears in the foreground of his works, often becoming the key motive for his observations and structuring the importance of his investigations. These profiles of individual's self-perception highlight existential aspect of Vyčinas philosophizing.

Individual in Vyčinas works is not disinterested, passive or crowd drowned Heideggerian Das Man - opposite is exactly the case. Embedded in everyday life, the worldly, he solves problems of life, and thus reflects and perceives his place in the world. In search of an individual's place and actualization in today's world, Vyčinas develops individual's self-perception first by showing that the individual is living authentically only if he radically articulates the question of existence. Vyčinas argues that the individual should be released from the increasing influence of the social, economic, political and other systems, which shape his being today.

Subsequent thinking of Vyčinas shifts toward the question of language. According to him, individual problems as more and more included in the cultural and historical context, where the individual perceives himself living in historically constituted tradition. In later works the question of individual's being and self-awareness is also extended reflecting the old Lithuanian way of living and cultural foundations of the ethnic community.

Vyčinas develops the question of individual's self-perception in order to solve two major challenges. The first is more developed in his early works and is related to the individual's search for self-identity and self-perception, and his efforts to define the meaningful dimension of life. The second challenge, more developed in his later works, is related to the Lithuanian ethnic identity problem that has arisen after emigration from the occupied Lithuania. Vyčinas actually experienced the threat of Lithuanian loss of its way of life, leading to the disappearance of its ethnic identity. Therefore self-perception issue differs in Vyčinas early and late works. While in the early works Vyčinas thought has begun as a philosophical analysis of individual existence, later it brings him to the actualization of identity of Lithuanian community. We can conclude that Vyčinas thinking moves from the problem of individual's self-perception, to the issue of identity of a community.

Conclusion

1. Comparative analysis of different evolutionary stages of Vyčinas works leads to the conclusion that his works could be divided into early and late thinking. Early thinking is based on Heidegger's ontological hermeneutic phenomenology position. While analyzing ideas of Western philosophers Vyčinas develops the ontological question of being, which he regarded as the ultimate grounding principle of all thinking. The later works of Vyčinas consist of mythological investigations, since the author concentrates on the hermeneutic exploration of myth. He is looking for opportunities to restore the old perception of the world based on mythical values.

2. Vyčinas philosophical research is mainly based on the ideas of Heidegger, and thus Vyčinas does not create an independent philosophical position. Reflecting on the development of Western philosophical tradition, trying to balance the Western

technical thinking, investigating mythical traditions, exploring spiritual and cultural foundations of individual, our thinker takes a position as a commentator of Heidegger's ideas. Vyčinas distinctive insights appear in later works, when his thinking is leaning towards the mythical discourse.

3.   Vyčinas thinking is not purely theoretical. Refusing to develop the prevailing universal, cognitive methods and systems in Western thinking, he is looking for conceptual integrity of developing world. Avoiding abstract theoretical reasoning, he focuses phenomenological thinking on the immediate contact of individual with the world. Vyčinas' individual is an independent self-sufficient entity and part of the whole world at the same time. Therefore Vyčinas' thinking is not based on theory and norms, but on rethinking of individual experience.

4.   In early works Vyčinas sees the foundations of philosophical thought in creative synthesis of theoretical and mythical thinking. In order to fill the emptiness caused by the weakening of old traditional values, to cope with the radical rationalism, Vyčinas requires openness and non-reductionism in philosophical thinking. While developing the archaic images of mythopoetical discourse and enriched worldview through intuitive access to direct awareness, Vyčinas hopes to overcome the prevailing technical limitations of modern Western thinking.

5.   Vyčinas wants to replace Western scientific thinking with the thinking based on real life experience, supported by profiles from mythical discourse. But while developing mythopoetical thinking, Vyčinas forgets that myth, not unlike science, is a culturally oriented mode of awareness, forming its own prejudices that impose a distinctive rationality; it is a limiting explanation of the experience of the world. It can be concluded that, instead of phenomenological consciousness purified from prior assumptions Vyčinas thinking moves from theory-based pedagogy to mythically interpreted nature.

6.   Developing the question of historicity Vyčinas uses the one of his most important concept of *nutikimas*, which later in his work becomes philosophically problematic, since it becomes overwhelmingly associated with mythical interpretations of nature. Turning from theoretical investigation of modern Western

cultural discourses to mythical explanation of nature, Vyčinas does not solve the problem of historicity because the limitations of theoretical thinking are not overcome. These limitations disappear from our sight, because phenomena in mythical thinking lose their clear boundaries.

7.   Self-perception issue is very significant across all Vyčinas works. He solves it in a number of ways: examining the structures of Dasein and developing individual question of being; exploring the Western philosophical tradition of thinking; raising questions concerning the spiritual background in contemporary Western culture; trying to restore the old Lithuanian way of life and the mythical world of values. To sum up, the early work focused on individual self-perception leads Vyčinas' thinking to the later works where the question of identity of Lithuanian community in contemporary globalized world is explored in terms of mythical discourse.