Г. Н. Кузьменко, О. А. Евреева

Проблема философского содержания понятия «экономическая деятельность» в учебной и справочной литературе

Введение. В структуру понятия «экономическая деятельность», кроме конкретного содержания, связанного с эмпирической реальностью, входит содержание философское, связанное с научной картиной мира. Отсюда возникает проблема: в процессе исторического развития экономической науки в понятии «экономическая деятельность» остается семантическая инерция прошлых представлений о мире и человеке, проявляемая в языковых конструкциях. Данные изменения должны учитываться в учебном процессе, так как понятие «экономической деятельности» является одной из дидактических единиц.

Материалы и методы. Материалом исследования стала справочная и учебная литература, а также экономическая классика (труды Аристотеля и др.). Используются методы философского анализа, в первую очередь, системный и компаративный. Системный метод позволяет выявить детерминанты философского содержания понятия «экономическая деятельность», связанные с научной картиной мира. Компаративный метод позволяет оценить изменение философского содержания понятия в ходе его исторического развития, рассмотреть соизмеримость новых и традиционных смыслов.

Результаты исследования. Решение проблемы философского содержания понятия «экономическая деятельность» требует элиминации из него мировоззренческого наследия прошлых эпох, в частности, античного (естественно, с учетом исторической ценности этого наследия). Представляется важным модернизация философского содержания понятия «экономическая деятельность» в рамках современной научной картины мира. В последней понимание экономической деятельности корректно в качестве не одного из видов, но в качестве одного из аспектов деятельности человека, оценки этой деятельности с позиции стоимости.

Обсуждение и заключение. Реализация указанных теоретико-методологических процедур целесообразна. Смена научных картин мира, которая происходит в ходе развития науки, приводит к существенным изменениям в философском содержании понятийного аппарата экономической науки. Если данные изменения не учитываются в учебной и справочной литературе, то это негативно влияет на качество подготовки экономиста.

Ключевые слова: экономическая деятельность, наука, научная картина мира, научное понятие, традиция, модерн, постмодерн

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G. N. KUZMENKO, O. A. EVREEVA

The problem of the philosophical content of the concept of "Economic activity" in the educational and reference literature

Introduction. The structure of the concept of "economic activity", in addition to the specific content related to empirical reality, includes philosophical content related to the scientific picture of the world. Hence the problem arises: in the process of the historical development of economic science, the semantic inertia of past ideas about the world and man, manifested in language constructions, remains in the concept of "economic activity". These changes should be taken into account in the educational process, since the concept of "economic activity" is one of the didactic units.

Materials and methods. The research material is reference and educational literature, as well as economic classics (works of Aristotle, etc.). The article uses methods of philosophical analysis, primarily systematic and comparative. The systematic method allows us to identify the determinants of the philosophical content of the concept of "economic activity" associated with the scientific picture of the world. The comparative method allows us to assess the change in the philosophical content of the concept in the course of its historical development, to consider the commensurability of new and traditional meanings.

The results of the study. The solution of the problem of the philosophical content of the concept of "economic activity" requires the elimination of the ideological heritage of past epochs, in particular, the ancient one (naturally, taking into account the historical value of this heritage). It is important to modernize the philosophical content of the concept of "economic activity" within the framework of the modern scientific picture of the world. In the latter, the understanding of economic activity is correct as not one of the types, but as one of the aspects of human activity, evaluating this activity from the point of view of value.

Discussion and conclusion. The implementation of these theoretical and methodological procedures is expedient. The change of scientific pictures of the world, which occurs in the course of the development of science, leads to significant changes in the philosophical content of the conceptual apparatus of economic science. If these changes are not taken into account in the educational and reference literature, this negatively affects the quality of the economist's training.

Keywords: economic activity, science, scientific picture of the world, scientific concept, tradition, modern, postmodern

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Introduction

The development of economic science is reflected in the content changes of its conceptual apparatus, but the structure of the changes is ambiguous. The creation of new knowledge at the level of private research changes (clarifies) the content of scientific concepts is insignificant, since it occurs within the framework of established economic theory. It is another matter when there is a change in the scientific worldview behind economic paradigms, leading to the approval of new principles for the development of economic science. In this case, changes in the content of economic concepts are significant, since they occur at their philosophical level. If such a change in the content of concepts is approached uncritically, then there is a mechanical accumulation of semantic meanings in them, and the inertia of the previous scientific pictures of the world manifests itself. This makes the content of the concepts of economic science eclectic.

Recall that the accumulation of knowledge is only a special case of the development of science, a huge role is played here by the rotation of knowledge, carried out when changing scientific pictures of the world. In the course of this rotation, the content of concepts radically changes, first of all, their philosophical content. Ignoring such laws of the development of scientific knowledge reduces the effectiveness of its application.

As the analysis of sources shows, this important moment for economic science is not fully taken into account in the scientific, educational and reference literature. Although for the first time attention was drawn to a radical change in the philosophical content of scientific concepts in the course of their historical development back in the 70s of the 20th century T. Kuhn [15]. Due to the professional interests of this scientist, the discovery was limited to the concepts of natural science. Attention to the natural sciences was also paid by other scientists, from domestic ones, in particular, P. P. Gaidenko [8; 9]. Their historical and philosophical analysis of the humanitarian component, revealed, among other things, in the works of the classics of economic thought (Aristotle, A. Smith, K. Marx, etc.), was not directly related to the philosophical content of the conceptual apparatus of economics.

The problem of the philosophical content of economic concepts was raised in the works of postmodern philosophers, for example, in J.-F. Lyotard [16], G. Deleuze, P.-F. Guattari [5], others. However, these authors did not set out to investigate the change in the content of economic concepts in the course of their historical development. The emphasis was placed on the new content that the thinkers themselves introduced into the philosophy of economics.

The largest economists of the 20th century also acted in the same way, which is clearly seen in the works of innovative-minded scientists close to the postmodern pool, in particular, to the positivist tradition (F. Hayek, M. Friedman and other representatives of the Mon Pelerin Society).

In general, the situation related to the assessment of the dynamics of the philosophical content of economic tools today is well illustrated by the review article by C. Hedoin «Philosophy and Economics: Recent Issues and Perspectives. Introduction to the Special Issue» [13] for a special issue of the *Revue d'économie politique* magazine devoted to philosophical issues of economics (2018). As the author rightly notes, "the 20th century witnessed a gradual decline in the interest of economists in philosophical issues." The authors of the special edition (Daniel M. Hausman D.M, Till Grüne-Yanoff T., Meinard Y.,

Jean-Sébastien Gharbi J-S. Colombo C., Gaertner W., others) point out several popular research topics. These are the nature (ontology) of economics, its meta-methodology (epistemology), ethics and other philosophical aspects of economic theory. As for the changes in the philosophical content of the concepts of economics, including the concept of "economic activity", they remain out of attention. Here, modern researchers do not see the problem, thereby, secretly, continuing to adhere to the cumulative history of science (which was argumentatively questioned by T. Kuhn). This approach is also expressed in the reference literature, for example, in the article "Philosophy of Economics" of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy [11]. It is natural that this point of view is scaled in the educational literature. A typical example, a domestic textbook on economic theory for universities by V. A. Sidorov, E. L. Kuznetsova, A.V. Bolik [22]. In the first paragraph of the textbook – "Philosophical problems of Economics", the standard of problems already expressed above and the absence of a problem of the philosophical content of economic concepts, including the concept of "economic activity", is fixed.

The purpose of this article is to fill this gap by the example of studying the changes in the philosophical content of the concept of "economic activity" that occurred during its historical development. In other words, we are talking about the study of the influence that a change in the scientific picture of the world has on the philosophical understanding of an essential feature expressed in the concept of "economic activity". This kind of research requires going beyond the framework of a specific science and seeing the content of concepts in a paradigmatic context. Achieving this goal will increase the effectiveness of the use of the conceptual apparatus of economic science, use the potential of philosophical analysis of the history and theory of economics both in the educational process and in the scientific creativity of the economist.

Materials and methods

The materials of the study were, first of all, modern economic educational and reference literature – both Russian and foreign – devoted to the topic "economic activity". Among the most significant sources on the conceptual apparatus of traditional economics, we will mention the works of Aristotle, on modern economics – the Nobel laureate F. Hayek. Articles of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the National Economic Encyclopedia (RF), the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (USA), a number of dictionaries on economics were also involved, definitions from the textbooks "General Economic Theory" were attracted by V. A. Sidorova, E. L. Kuznetsova, A.V. Bolik, "Fundamentals of Economics ..." by E. V. Borisova and others. A special issue of the *Revue d'économie politique* (2018), which contains articles on topical issues of the philosophy of economics, was involved in the development of the topic of the article.

The article uses the key methods of philosophical analysis: systematic and comparative. The system method allows us to identify the structure of the concept of "economic activity", its key philosophical element. This element is connected with the general worldview paradigm through the scientific picture of the world in which it was approved. In our case, at least three worldview paradigms are involved: the paradigm of tradition, which was formed in antiquity (for example, in the works of Aristotle), then the paradigm of modernity and postmodernity (the latter is manifested in the works of the positivist-thinking economist F. Hayek).

The comparative method allows us to identify the previously existing and newly emerged meanings of the concept of "economic activity" in the course of its development from antiquity to the present day and assess their common and special features. This analysis raises the question of the combination of these meanings, the validity of such semantic syntheses in the context of the incommensurability of the paradigms within which these meanings were formed.

The results of the study

At the moment, in the domestic educational and reference literature, there are many definitions of the concept of economic activity, a comparative analysis of which reveals the median of its content. In the reference top, economic activity is defined as "the activity of creating a socially useful product» [26, p. 56], as "conscious human activity for the production of economic goods and services» [7, p. 234], as "rationally organized activity of large groups of people entering into relations between themselves in the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services" [24, p. 751]. It is noted that the Constitution of the Russian Federation "mentions this type of activity, which is the activity of commercial, non-commercial organizations in the field of civil circulation" [27].

As for the educational literature, the idea that economic activity is a special type of human activity for the production of goods and services, in a broader sense – goods, is characteristic. For example, in the textbook "Fundamentals of economics ..." (Borisov E. V.) the purpose of economic activity is defined as "the creation of goods necessary for members of society" [3]. Another textbook (Zolotarchuk V. V.) states "the economic behavior of individuals ... regarding the effective allocation of resources" [28]. More detailed definitions of the concept of "economic activity" in the Russian glossary can be found in special works [for example, 10].

Sequential selection in the top of the vocabulary array reveals, among other things, the philosophical meaning of the median of the concept of "economic activity". Economic activity is understood as a separate type of human activity. What does the phrase "separate species" mean? It is assumed that the scope of the concept of "economic activity" is less than the scope of the concept of "activity" of a person and, therefore, is part of it. We have before us, first of all, a logical operation: the "activity" of a person is a generic concept, the "economic activity" of a person is a species concept. In the world reference literature, the specific status of "economic activity" has been discussed since the 19th century, moreover, the approach to the formation of this concept in the species status is criticized within the scientific community. The reason for the criticism is that it is impossible to limit the definition of the concept of "economic activity" to a logical, that is, a purely formal point. The essence of the question was expressed in 1921 by the prominent economist L. Mises. "There is a strong objection to this approach," he said, "namely, that in the end, the creation of material goods serves not only what we call economic purposes, but also many other purposes» [19, p. 28]. In other words, economic activity can be found in other human activities. This means that the allocation of economic activity as a type of activity is problematic.

The paradox, however, is that this problem of the species status of economic activity arose historically relatively recently. The concept of economic activity has a centuries-old tradition, and a retrospective analysis of the content of this concept shows that in the scientific picture of the world in the context of which it was formed (and this was the ancient

scientific picture of the world), its definition as one of the individual types of human activity was quite correct.

The traditional content of the concept of economic activity. The median definition, broadcast by most of the modern reference literature, formally reproduces the logic of Aristotle's economic thought (VI century BC). The ancient thinker, we recall, singled out economic activity precisely as a specific type of activity to which people of a certain natural disposition are predisposed. Aristotle's contribution to economic theory can hardly be overestimated. However, his economic views detail that special approach to understanding man and society, which was characteristic of antiquity.

Let's consider this issue in more detail. Aristotle gives one of the best definitions of man for his era. In the work "Politics", the thinker defines a person as "a political ("social") animal» [1, p. 7]. Modern representatives of social sciences and humanities (economists, lawyers, sociologists, political scientists, etc.) often pay attention to the amazing relevance of such a "socially-oriented" approach of Aristotle to understanding human nature. However, few people take into account the fact that the concept of "social" in modern scientific discourse differs significantly from its understanding in antiquity. The modern content of the concept of "social" is connected with the idea of differentiation, the distinction between "natural" and "social", but in ancient times there is no such distinction. According to Aristotle, society (the state) arises and exists naturally. "The state is a product of natural origin", the thinker notes – it "belongs to what exists by nature"». [1, p. 8].

The same assessment applies to human activities. For Aristotle, man is a social animal, and his true activity is not the result of free will, but the manifestation of natural necessity. If we follow the logic of the thinker, then in relation to the actions of people it seems the most correct to use the term "behavior", and not "activity". Different types of economic behavior of people - that's what the socio-philosophical works of the ancient thinker actually describe. People who are different in nature should be engaged in agriculture, cattle breeding, handicrafts, and trade. And even slavery is explained as a phenomenon that is determined by nature itself - slaves are born, the philosopher believes. It is precisely the differences in the nature of people that Aristotle substantiates the existence of various types of economic activity, substantiates the very type of economic activity, which is different from other types of human activity.

Of course, the ancient thinker distinguishes the ideal from reality. In contrast to the ideal of the proper, in the space of existence, the social statuses of a person can deviate from the natural norm, in other words, a person is forced to do "not his own business": a born cattle breeder becomes a farmer, and a slave by nature – manages the state. However, such unnatural behavior is painful for a person, he will try to avoid it with all his might. Following your natural principle has a beneficial effect on a person. "It is useful and just," says the ancient thinker, "for one to be in bondage, for another to rule, and it is necessary that one should obey, and the other should rule and exercise the power invested in him by nature [1, p. 9].

The social philosophy postulated by Aristotle finds expression in his epistemology. Understanding the "social" as secondary to the "natural" leads to the fact that the theory of the state, including its economic part, is essentially reduced to a natural science theory. True, and this is another difficulty of the subject under consideration, it should be emphasized that ancient natural science is fundamentally different from modern, since nature for ancient thinkers is anthropomorphic (reflecting the anthropomorphism of the ancient myth). This can be seen in more detail when referring to the metaphysics of Aristotle. Central here

is the idea of the expediency (teleology) of nature, its desire for the highest Good. This very goal is set by the divine Mind, which continuously structures the world chaos, building the cosmos—a complete and harmonious system, a beautiful natural order (part of which is the social order, and within it, the economic order). Every being in this world has its own purpose, and consciously or unconsciously strives to fulfill it. An analysis of Aristotle's metaphysics makes it possible to clarify the important semantic nuances of the concept of economic activity in antiquity – we are talking about various species of economic behavior of people, the different nature of which is expediently harmonized by the divine principle. Due to its high theoretical level, the influence of Aristotle's economic concept went far beyond the chronological framework of antiquity, but the true content of his theory is revealed precisely within this framework.

After the conducted excursion into the history of the concept of economic activity, a natural question arises. How appropriate is it to reproduce the achievements of antiquity in the modern economic dictionary? Recently, the role of revolutions in the historical development of science has become more apparent. The development of science is not so much cumulation as the rotation of knowledge, carried out when the scientific pictures of the world change. The terms can remain the same – nature, society, activity, etc. – the content of concepts is radically changing, first of all, their philosophical content. Ignoring such regularities in the development of scientific knowledge reduces the effectiveness of its application.

In our case, we are talking about those theoretical and methodological errors that arise in connection with the ideas of the ancient classic, implicitly preserved in the conceptual apparatus of modern economic theory. Intuitively, scientists are aware of the semantic shift that, in the course of the historical development of economic theory, broke the connection between the idea of natural inequality of people and the idea of their different types of activities. However, the preservation of the traditional subtext in the philosophical content of the concept of economic activity, based on an appeal to the formal, logical side of the "genus – species" structure, shows that intuition alone is not enough. Hence the relevance of the philosophical reflection of the concept of "economic activity", the content of which should be determined not only by the past, but also by modern scientific pictures of the world.

The concept of "economic activity" in the context of the modern socio-humanitarian paradigm. The modern meta-theoretical level of scientific knowledge is formed under the strong influence of two philosophical paradigms: modern and postmodern.

Modernism includes the classical type of Modern science, which proceeds from the objectively existing material world and its subjective reflection by the human consciousness. It is characterized by the perception of nature and society as two different ontological realities, which requires the division of the sciences into a natural and socio-humanitarian cluster.

Postmodernism includes a post-non-classical type of science that problematizes the objective material world and brings human consciousness to the fore. For a scientist of the social and humanitarian profile, acting within the framework of post-non-classical science, the main principles of the study are freedom of will, the factor of socialization, the social basis for the formation of material and spiritual needs, as well as the universal nature of activity (for example, [2; 4; 6; 17]).

The latter circumstance requires a separate comment. Universality in this case means not only that a person can engage in any kind of activity regardless of their origin (which

is quite natural for the New Age). We are also talking about the fact that the very logical structure of "genus-species" in relation to the concept of activity is implied to be incorrect. Any human activity involves simultaneously many actual and potential aspects of activity (rational, moral, and others), including, what is important in our case, the economic aspect.

In modern economic theory, reasoning in this context is characteristic of the neoclassical direction, which has been developing since the end of the 19th century, especially intensively - from the middle of the 20th century. A special contribution to this direction was made by scientists from several national schools – the Austrian one (K. Menger and L. Mises, already cited above); Lozanskaya (L. Walras, V. Pareto); English and American (in the latter, the School of Economics at the University of Chicago and The Mont Pelerin Society played an important role) (for example, [21; 25]).

The philosophical justification for this approach to the understanding of economic activity can be seen in the works of the Nobel laureate in economics F. Hayek (the Nobel Prize was awarded for his work in the field of pricing in 1974). F. Hayek is a principled supporter of the Austrian school of K. Menger. According to the latter, value is not an objective property of a thing, but is only an individual's judgment of the good. Therefore, in fact, the meaning of market relations is not in the exchange of material things, but in the exchange of ideas about them – "goods are called any goods intended for exchange» [18, p. 239]. Continuing the line outlined by the Austrian economist, F. Hayek declares values (and, therefore, prices), which are formed as a result of market interaction, a sophisticated system of codification of social experience. In fact, the scientist is talking about a specific sign system associated with an economic social institution and the relations of people within it.

To understand the logic of such a conclusion, it is necessary to turn to the philosophical foundation of the scientist's economic theory. The philosophical views of F. Hayek, in his own words, were strongly influenced by L. Wittgenstein and K. Popper, both bright leaders of late positivism (the origins of this philosophical trend in the Kantian doctrine). Therefore, in his systems analysis, F. Hayek, as expected, turns to criticism of traditional philosophical ontology, epistemology, social philosophy, ethics [12]. According to the scientist, objective reality is fundamentally inaccessible to rationalization. Directly opposing the metaphysics of Aristotle, he writes that "Reason with a capital letter does not exist in the singular, as given or available to any individual person» [12, p. 35]. Traditional views on cognition, in his opinion, provoke an ideocratic reaction in social theory and practice. Man's claims to true knowledge of objective reality and its laws are dangerous, first of all, for the man himself. F. Hayek is sure that such claims are "pernicious arrogance", otherwise – "the road to slavery", to totalitarian societies [12]. As for the material world (nature), which is perceived by people, it is, according to F. Hayek, in a certain sense, is the product of the activity of the person himself – "we never deal with reality in its entirety, but always with some sample of it made with the help of our models" [12, p. 20]. People are surrounded by an intersubjective construct, a kind of symbolic interpretation based on the system-forming rules set by society.

Under this perception of the world, social institutions are built that regulate the activities of people. Here, the main role is played not by the physical (biological), but by the social nature of man, not by natural phenomena and qualities, but by their signs, revealing their meaning, in which historical experience is accumulated. This kind of ontological reality is a natural environment for the activity of a person's personality. Here, a person's personality manifests itself in different social roles that it can simultaneously play in a particular social institution, for example, in one - a spouse, in another-an entrepreneur, in a third – a teacher, etc. (recall that Aristotle linked the social role of man with his natural essence, that is, in

the strict sense, the role in life was one). In other words, an integral personality carries out an integral activity that can be interpreted in different ways within the framework of a particular social institution. If we are talking about the institution of morality, then here the activity will be assessed from the point of view of morality, since any act of a person has a moral character. If we are talking about an institution of economics, then here any activity will be evaluated through the prism of value. Human activity has not types, but aspects.

Achievements of F. Hayek's achievements in the field of economic science, thanks to which he received the Nobel Prize, are organically fit into the context of the post-non-classical scientific picture of the world. Therefore, the scientist had to start a discussion with his numerous opponents by clarifying the conceptual apparatus, since the traditional content of concepts within the framework of classical science, from which the opponents proceeded, did not allow this discussion to be conducted correctly. The ideological conflict of F. Hayek's connection with the common front of economic theorists (socialism, Keynesianism, and others) is explained by the incommensurability of the paradigms within which the opponents were located. At the same time, his research stimulated the expansion of a new productive trend in economic theory. It is considered not accidental that in the second half of the XX century "economic science turns to the philosophical trends of neo-positivism ... and post-positivism" [23, p.15].

Discussion and conclusion

The authors, analyzing scientific, reference and educational literature on economics, encountered an exceptional fact. The history of the economy is not considered in the context of the history of the socio-humanitarian cluster, since philosophical tools are not involved in relation to the history of the economy. We can agree with the list of philosophical problems in economics on which there is a consensus (positive and normative economics, cause-and-effect relationships in economics, and others). The list of such problems in the scientific journal «Revue d'economie politique» [13] coincides with the list of problems in the reference edition of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy [11] and with the list of problems that are given in textbooks, for example, in the textbook «General Economic Theory» [22]. But in this extensive list there is no philosophical problem of the history of economics, that is, the problem of changing the philosophical content of the conceptual apparatus of economic theory. And this problem ultimately affects both the quality of scientific research and the quality of the educational process.

The importance of the problem indicated by the authors is seen by the example of considering changes in the philosophical content of the concept of "economic activity". The understanding of human economic activity in different epochs has fundamental differences. These differences have a natural connection with the scientific pictures of the world. The philosophical analysis of the content of the concept of "economic activity" in the scientific literature shows that it implicitly preserves the paradigm inertia. Its philosophical meaning, despite the correction that economic scientists intuitively made with each semantic shift, still has a genetic connection with the traditional Aristotelian scheme. According to the latter, economic activity is a naturally separate type of activity, which is engaged in by people who are predisposed to this by their nature. In the currently emerging new scientific picture of the world, in which philosophical postmodernism plays an important role, the understanding of economic activity as a "type of activity" seems correct only with the necessary reservations

(an appeal to the formal logic “species – genus”, etc.). From this position, the isolation of a certain economic system of interactions from the entire volume of human life is artificial. Hence, it becomes possible to consider other forms of human activity from the standpoint of economic expediency, and vice versa - the interpretation of production, exchange and consumption of goods and services in the language of law, morality, politics and other social institutions. Within the framework of the modern scientific picture of the world, based on the concept of a complete personality and the unity of its activities, the understanding of economic activity is organic as not a "type of activity", but as an "aspect of activity". However, in order to avoid paradigmatic contradictions in this concept, it is necessary to eliminate from its philosophical content the meanings preserved by inertia from past epochs.

Taking into account this circumstance, which is closely related to the functioning of the conceptual apparatus of economics, can have a positive impact on the productivity of both modern economic research and the educational process. In the latter case, understanding the philosophical content of the concept of "economic activity" solves a number of interrelated didactic tasks. It allows us to raise the question of the meaning of the philosophical content in the conceptual apparatus of economics, which, ultimately, will allow us to better understand the structural connections within economic theory, to see the patterns in its historical development. Further, students can understand the general scientific context in which economic theory develops, see the deep connection of economics with other sciences of the socio-humanitarian cluster, and this knowledge has a practical interdisciplinary side. Finally, thanks to familiarization with the philosophical content of economic concepts, students can correctly assess the potential of philosophical tools for a particular science, which is an important marker of higher education.

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Информация об авторах
Кузьменко Григорий Николаевич

(Россия, г. Москва)
Доцент, доктор философских наук, профессор
кафедры философии
Российский государственный социальный университет
E-mail: rgsu-centr@mail.ru
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7616-1404

Евреева Ольга Анатольевна
(Россия, г. Москва)

Кандидат философских наук, доцент кафедры
философии
Российский государственный социальный университет
E-mail: evreeva@yandex.ru

Information about the authors
Grigory N. Kuzmenko

(Russia, Moscow)
Associate Professor, Doctor of Philosophy,
Professor of the Philosophy Department
Russian State Social University
E-mail: rgsu-centr@mail.ru
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7616-1404

Olga A. Evreeva
(Russia, Moscow)

PhD in Philosophy,
Associate Professor, Philosophy Department
Russian State Social University
E-mail: evreeva@yandex.ru