

Robert Johnson

Depositum

1. *Meaning and location in Kant's works*

A 'depositum' is a contract resulting in one party's coming into possession of something (a "gratuitous" contract) as a trust. For instance, a minor may have his inheritance cared for by a third party, through a contract with his parents. The third party then has certain rights (and duties) regarding that good, such as the right to care for it in ways that will preserve it.

Wichtige Stellen: 5:27-8, 8:286-7

2. *Related keywords in Kant's work*

Vertrag

3. *Philosophical function in Kant's philosophy*

Kant uses the example of a depositum contract as an illustration twice. First, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he thinks it obvious that a maxim to increase one's wealth by every safe

means could not be willed as a universal law, and hence violates the Categorical Imperative.

5:27-8 For suppose I were to have been left with a trust by someone who died leaving no record of it. May I increase my own wealth by keeping it? Surely not. Not only does ordinary moral judgment find this abhorrent. Kant thinks it obvious that I could not will that my maxim also become the universal law "Everyone may deny a deposit which no one can prove has been made". I could not because were that to become universal law, no one would make deposits, and thus I could not act on my maxim of increasing my wealth by keeping the one in my hands.

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The second place where Kant uses this example is in "On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice". Here, again, he uses it to point out that the fact that the demands of the moral law can conflict with our own happiness is obvious even to an eight year old. It is immediately obvious that someone possessing a trust (i.e., a depositum), the owner of which has died leaving no record, must not keep it, even if his happiness might be furthered by so doing. 8:286-7