

Gall. quart. 43

Binding:

Original paper binding decorated with embossed floral motifs on a gilded background.

History:

Part of the manuscript has features of an autograph: dedication for the king of Prussia, Frederick II, table of contents, pagination, notes in the margin and small alterations were made by the hand of d'Alembert. Under the dedication there is a personal signature of d'Alembert. The manuscript was made in France. The donation explains how the manuscript reached Königlische Bibliothek in Berlin. Destroyed, stained binding and badly damaged spine might indicate that the manuscript was intensively used by its owner. Pen tests (19<sup>th</sup> century) on the title page are a surprising example of the lack of care for the valuable manuscript.

Content:

Continuation of explanations concerning the elements of philosophy in four chapters. XVI. *Sur les Elemens de Geometrie* (pp.1-37, 37 pages): d'Alembert grieves over the lack of good geometry textbooks among the multitude of the published ones; good means presenting concepts in natural order, provided with appropriate proofs. He emphasises the importance of good (concise and precise) definitions; he makes a critical review and presents his own definitions of terms such as: parallel lines, straight lines, angle, etc. XVII. *Sur les Elemens d'algebre* (pp.39-62, 24 pages): he gives definitions of algebra, examples, principles, rules and false ideas. XVIII. *De l'application de l'algebre à la Géometrie* (pp. 63-75, 13 pages): he emphasises the importance of applying algebra in the theory of curves. XIX. *Sur l'usage et sur l'abus de la metaphysique en Geometrie & en général dans les Sciences Mathématiques* (pp.77-104, 28 pages): he rejects metaphysics understood as a majestic and dark theory of unrecognised things: the attributes of God, the nature of soul, etc.; he quotes with respect a long excerpt from Frederick's letter concerning this matter, *une lettre digne d'être lue par tous les philosophes et par tous les rois* (p. 78). He approves of metaphysics as a set of general principles, which are the base for every study researching general entities: general physics, grammar, music, geometry. Editions in: *Melanges de littérature, d'histoire et de philosophie, nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et augmentée tres considérablement par l'Auteur* (D'Alembert), volumes I-V. Amsterdam, aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1760-1768; Leide, chez les frères Murray, 1782; Leide, 1783 and many others. Particular "Éclaircissements" are included after corresponding chapters of *Éléments*, in accordance with d'Alembert's suggestion: Bastien, 1805; Belin, 1821. Modern editions: *Essais sur les éléments de philosophie*, Corpus des Oeuvres de Philosophie en langue française, Fayard, Paris 1986. In preparation: Jean-Pierre Schandeler (ed.), *Oeuvres complètes de Jean Le Rond D'Alembert, série IV: Écrits philosophiques, historiques et littéraires, vol. 5: Mélanges d'histoire, de littérature et de philosophie*, Groupe d'Alembert, CNRS Editions Alpha, after the year 2011. With reference to this manuscript, cf. Lemm, p. 17.