Dear Participants, Esteemed Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

As all of you certainly know, the title of this conference is "Tribute to Kurt Gödel". This afternoon, however, we are going to honor and pay tribute to Petr Vopěnka. This is no way a contradiction — Petr Vopěnka, was a great Czech and Czechoslovak mathematician, logician and philosopher, an inspiring teacher and the founder and charismatic leader of the Prague School in Mathematical Logic and Set Theory, who made a remarkable contribution to several topics Kurt Gödel had been interested in and working on, most notably to the problems of independence of the Axiom of Choice and of the Continuum Hypothesis within the standard axiomatic systems of set theory. More specifically, this afternoon the Kurt Gödel Prize will be awarded by the Kurt Gödel Society in Brno upon Petr Vopěnka In Memoriam. And there hardly could be a better choice for the first recipient of this award.

Petr Vopěnka influenced at least three generations of Czech and Slovak scholars and his students are spread in many universities not only in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also abroad on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. His work counts more than two dozens of volumes, but even more impressive than its extent is the depth and originality of the ideas he introduced and elaborated on. No less admiration deserves the right artistic beauty of his books and essays, manifested both in his brilliant literal style as well as in his masterly wielding Czech language. He was firmly convinced that a genuine, profound and authentic philosophy worth its name can be carried on just in the mother tongue of the philosophizing person, and he expressed this his opinion on several occasions. That's why I am viewing the fact that this celebration is held in English, and not in Czech and Slovak, i.e., in the intimately akin native languages, both of the speakers as well as of the majority of the listeners, with some bewilderment, as — however little and innocent — but still an embezzlement upon his legacy. I hope, that he, when watching and listening us now from heaven, will understand this gesture of politeness towards our guests from abroad and forgive us generously.

Some few years ago I gave a lecture in Brno about Petr Vopěnka and my personal relation to him and his work, based on my article which appeared in 2016 in the Czech Philosophical Journal, in an issue dedicated to his memory. I tried to asses his work and ideas by referring to the three degree classification of genii introduced by the Polish writer Stanisław Lem in one of his fictitious reviews of nonexisting books, gathered in a real book titled *The Perfect Emptiness* which appeared in Czech translation in 1983. Genii of the third class are those who succeed to be recognized and receive appreciation already during their lifespan. Genii of the second class, during their lives, are ignored or viewed with suspicion, in the better case, but more frequently they are persecuted, arrested, expelled, interned in mental houses or even sentenced to death. Nonetheless, their contribution is recognized and honored by the next or by some of the following generations. Finally, according to Lem's hero of the fictitious book under review, there should and even must exist genii of the first class, creators of such original, profound ideas and coming up with such ground-breaking discoveries that will never be understood and recognized by the rest of the mankind.

Obviously, Vopěnka fits partly into the third of Lem's classes. However, I am sure that later generations will appreciate a pretty large piece of his work which escaped

recognition of his contemporaries, placing him partly into the second Lem's class, as well. And, due to Vopěnka's intimate relation to the Czech dissent, if there did not come the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution in 1989, much less of his work would move from the second class to the third one. During my lecture I repeated some arguments from that article — too lengthy and delicate to recall them at this occasion — that some of the most ingenious and profound of Vopěnka's ideas and contributions may never become sufficiently understood and recognized and will remain lost to the mankind forever. In other words, Vopěnka at least partly belongs to Lem's first class of genii, too.

I think, that this my short introductory note is sufficient for a preliminary general acquaintance with the personality of Petr Vopěnka to this distinguished audience. Three highly competent speakers are ready to follow me and present three different aspects of his life and work in their talks. All of them are former students and collaborators of Petr Vopěnka, they spent several years in his vicinity and have known him very well: Lev Bukovský from the Šafárik University in Košice, Alena Vencovská from the University of Manchester and Kateřina Trlifajová from the Center for Theoretical Studies of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Charles University in Prague.

Our first speaker, Prof. Lev Bukovský from the Šafárik University in Košice, is going to deliver a talk titled *From Topology to Set Theory*.

The next speaker is Prof. Alena Vencovská from the University of Manchester. The title of her talk is *Alternative Set Theory and New Infinitary Mathematics*.

Our third speaker is Prof. Kateřina Trlifajová from the Center for Theoretical Studies of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Charles University in Prague. She will accompany us at *An Encounter with Petr Vopěnka*.

Petr Vopěnka already during his life became a legend within the Czecho-Slovak mathematical community. Those of us, who by our good fortune had the privilege to have known him personally, still sense the feeling that the history, and the more the Czech and Slovak mathematical community, still owe lot to him. I am firmly convinced that the Kurt Gödel Prize, to be awarded upon him In Memoriam, represents a worthy and dignified atonement in this respect.

The prize will be passed over by Prof. Jan Novotný, the President of the Kurt Gödel Society in Brno, and taken on by Martin Vopěnka, the son of Prof. Petr Vopěnka. Last but not least, Prof. Novotný will tell you some words about the Kurt Gödel Society, about the relation of Petr Vopěnka to the mathematical community in Brno and about the reasons for awarding the Kurt Gödel Prize namely upon him.

Finally, let me invite Martin Vopěnka to come here and take on the Prize.