SUMMARY

The aim of the proposed thesis is a partial reconstruction of Spinoza’s theory of the individual. This theory can be found in Spinoza’s *Ethics* and consists of three components: namely, Spinoza’s doctrines of singular essences, of physical individuals and of *conatus*. In this thesis, we focus on the doctrine of *conatus*; however, since the three conceptions are tightly connected, the doctrines of physical individuals and of singular essences will be briefly touched upon as well.

The starting point of our thesis is the following problem: Spinoza simultaneously uses multiple terms to designate *conatus* – and those terms seem, at least at the first sight, to have very different meanings. Specifically speaking, Spinoza identifies *conatus* with “power of acting”, “force of existing” and “actual essence”. First, we present a brief explanation of meanings of those terms and subsequently we attempt to reconcile them. In order to be able to do so, we expound Spinoza’s doctrine of essences in more detail; afterwards we show that the aforementioned terms can indeed be reconciled if *conatus* is understood as force by which an essence produces its necessary properties.

In the next step, however, we discover that this conception of *conatus* is not yet wholly adequate, because it disregards the fact that an essence can be affected by external causes. In order to take this fact into account, we therefore introduce the concept of “constitution of essence”. This concept is elucidated by our reading of the “physical digression” – the text in which Spinoza expounds his doctrine of physical individuals. In this way, we arrive at a more precise definition of *conatus*: as we now show, *conatus* has to be understood as force by which an essence reconstitutes itself by producing *propria* which, in a given situation, follow from it.

Finally, in the last chapter of our thesis, we briefly summarize the conception of individuality which is implied by Spinoza’s doctrine of *conatus* and we also hint at the possible relevance of this conception for Spinoza’s ethical theory.