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## Foucault's Conception of Power

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Foucault establishes his theory of power as a constructive and destructive force which does not disseminate itself from one source, but rather, is circulated through society. Power, in the Foucaultian sense, constitutes the human being as human, it is contained within us. Power is directly related to knowledge and discourse, which create and disseminate it respectively.

This idea of power differs greatly from the traditional European understanding of power. Power is often discussed in Western thought as power of the sovereign, power as a commodity which someone can either have or not have, and power as a repressive force. Foucault pushes back on all these powers saying that power is no longer sovereign; the new origin of power finds itself hidden in the clasps of the bourgeoisie society and their discourse. Foucault explains that power is not a commodity to have, but rather it circulates constantly throughout society. Finally, Foucault rejects the common perception of power as repressive, asserting that power creates and represses in the sense that the world would not exist without power. Nothing occurs, either constructively or destructively, without power being extended.

This theory of power radically alters previous discourse on freedom. Previously, freedom has been conceived as the absence of a sovereign power in an individual's affairs. Foucault would counter that this is not freedom, because power still exerts a large amount of force without the sovereign directly intervening. The sovereign, in Foucault's mind, is a representation of feudal past, when the sovereign had power. Now, the political concept sovereign merely distracts possible discourse directed at the origins of true power which are wielded in the fabric of power.

in bourgeois society. Any efforts to release the people from the perceived power of the sovereign are merely a misguided attempt at freedom, freedom lies in changing, not destroying, the underlying powers that exist in society.