

The Biopolitics of Violence

S.M. Amadae

State-executed violence is a well-known means by which disciplining pressures are imposed on the bodies of those comprising the body politic. Recently David Graeber and David Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), and James Scott's *Against the Grain* (2017) have incorporated analyses of the protean power of brute force in shaping the cultures and civilizations that form the backbone of human history. Graeber and Wengrow focus on the nuances of ingroup versus outgroup violence, and Scott argues that it took orchestrated group violence to generate the economic surpluses making high status of elites possible through imposing the condition of slavery on those conquered in battle. Against the backdrop of Michel Foucault's analysis of the state's exercise of power under the penal regimes of the dungeon, the Panopticon, and neoliberalism's subtle market discipline, I put forward a new perspective on the role violence plays in biopolitics. I introduce my formal model that demonstrates how arbitrary binary markers demarcating a two-group population with routine recourse to violence arises, necessarily results in systematic hierarchy between the members of the two groups. This research resonates with Scott's argument that violence in pre-state communities may exist as a precondition for the stratified societies typical of early modern, modern, and post-modern western civilization. Thus it may be the case that routine violence between individuals prior to organized governmentality is a necessary step on the way to more orchestrated biopolitical means of disciplining subjects to willingly participate in the machinery of statehood and political economic reproduction.