

Chart Shares

Brave New Worlds: A Comparison of Utopias & Dystopias

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Utopia, a literary form and philosophical term, is an idealized society. Its opposite, dystopia, more a literary form than a philosophical term, is a novel in which a demagogue controls society.

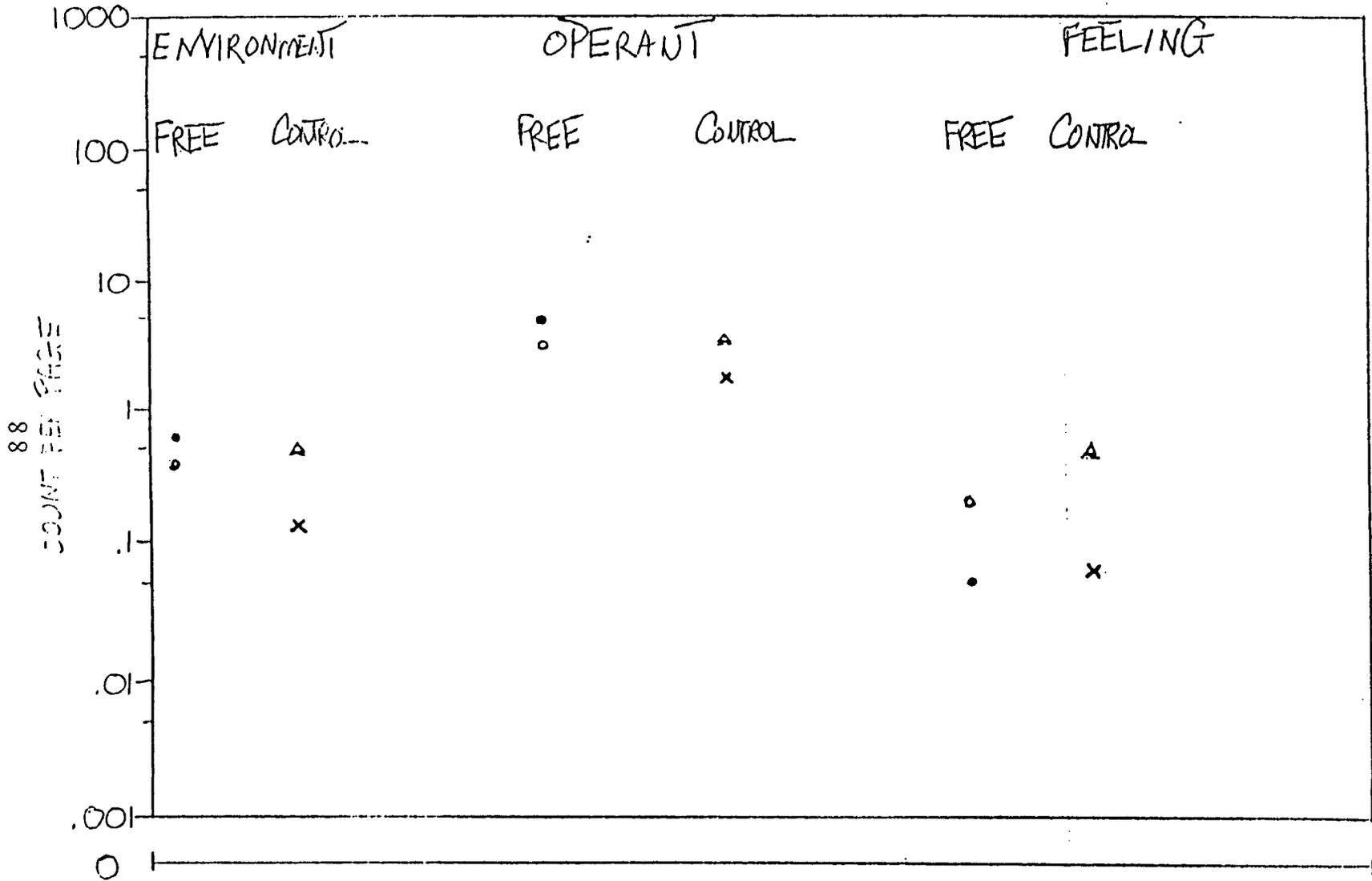
To compare these two forms in literature, I analyzed the environments, behaviors, and expressions of feelings according to whether they were free or controlled/restricted in three utopias and three dystopias. Environmental freedom and restriction exist in the physical environment--the freedom of open spaces, the restriction of cages or prisons. Behavioral freedom is defined by free operants--alternatives or choices such as presenting one's own learning material or choosing whether to do a, b, or q. Behavioral restrictions are controlled operants--answering the telephone, waking when the alarm rings, a student being called on. A feeling of freedom or restriction is a mental event occurring within a person, whether on a beach or in a cell, choosing or being told what to do.

I analyzed the first, middle, and final 27 pages as representative of each novel. The Chart shows that utopias had the higher frequency of free environments and operants, x1.7 higher for both than the controlled. Conversely, the dystopias had the higher frequency of restricted environments (x1.4) and controlled operants (x2) than the free.

Presentation of protagonist and antagonist free and restricted feelings occurred in the dystopias. The utopias had very little, if any, discussion of feelings. In the dystopias, the presentations of free and restricted feelings seemed designed to present a greater contrast of the free and controlled situations to underline the "evils" of a controlled society.

References

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UTOPIA
ISLAND
UTOPIA
WALLBUSTED

DYSTOPIA
BRAVE NEW WORLD
WE
A HANDMAID'S TALE

A.B. CALKIN

CHARACTERS

A.B. CALKIN

FREE / RESTRICTED

UTOPIA:

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x

DYSTOPIA:

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