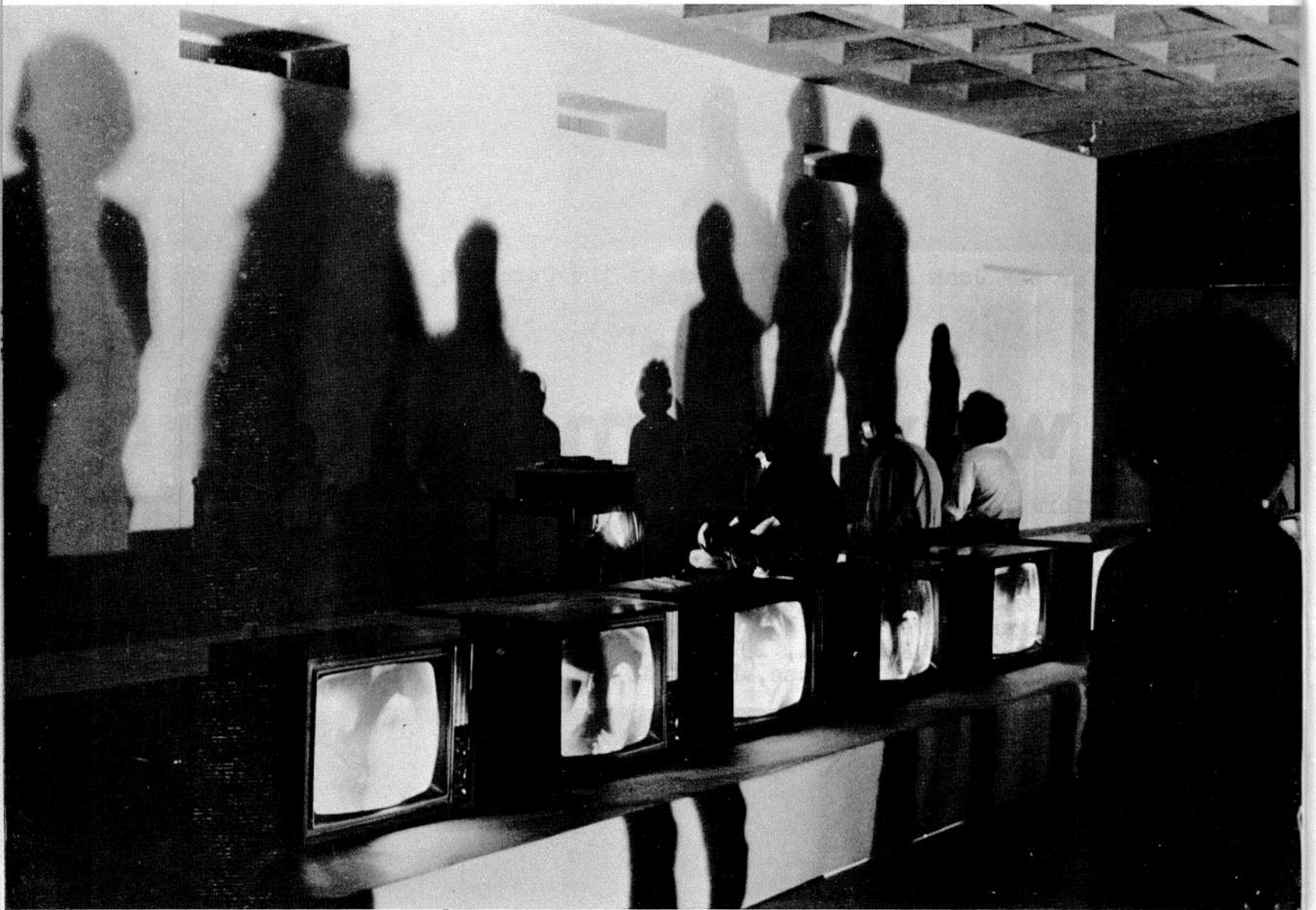




# P L A T O





# N O W

by Juan Downey

Nine performers in meditation attempt to produce alpha-waves. Their brain activity controls the recurrence of pre-recorded quotations from Plato's dialogues.

9 performers/9 video-channels/  
alpha-wave detectors/9 audio-  
recordings/public's shadows.  
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse,  
New York, 1973.

Plato's dialogues researched  
in collaboration with Jerry  
Bowen.

...human beings living in an underground cavern, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the cavern; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they can not move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And you see, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, and they see only their shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Plato: The Republic

For the world is a visible living creature, it contains all creatures that are visible and is itself an image of the intelligible. Plato: Timaeus

Stranger: Ourselves, I take it, and all other living creatures and the elements of natural things--fire, water, and their kindred--are all originals, the offspring, as we are well assured, of divine workmanship. Is it not so?

Theaetetus: Yes.

Stranger: And every one of these products is attended by images which are not the actual thing, and which also owe their existence to divine contrivance.

Theaetetus: You mean...?

Stranger: Dream images, and in daylight all those naturally produced semblances which we call 'shadow' when dark patches interrupt the light, or a 'reflection' when the light belonging to the eye meets and coalesces with the light belonging to something else on a bright and smooth surface and produces a form yielding a perception that is the reverse of the ordinary direct view.

Theaetetus: There are, indeed, these two products of divine workmanship--the original and the image that in every case accompanies it.

Plato: Theaetetus

The same argument applies to the natural receptacle of all bodies. It can always be called the same because it never alters its characteristics. For it continues to receive all things, and never itself takes a permanent impress from any of the things that enter it; it is a kind of neutral plastic material on which changing impressions are stamped by the things that enter it, making it appear different at different times. And the things which pass in and out of it are copies of the eternal realities, whose form they take in a wonderful way that is hard to describe.

Plato: Timaeus

There exists, first, the unchanging form entering no combination, but visible and imperceptible by any sense the object of thought: second, that which bears the same name as the form and resembles it, but is sensible and has come into existence, is in constant motion, comes into existence in and vanishes from a particular place, and is apprehended by opinion with the aid of sensation. Plato: Timaeus

And because of this dream state we are not awake to the distinctions we have drawn and others akin to them, and fail to state the truth about the true and unsleeping reality: namely that whereas an image, the terms of whose existence are outside its control in that it is always a moving shadow of something else, needs to come into existence in something else if it is to claim some degree of reality. Plato: Timaeus

Therefore we must not call the mother and receptacle of visible and sensible things either earth or air or fire or water, not yet any of their compounds or components; but we shall not be wrong if we describe it as invisible and formless. Plate: Timaeus

For the only existing thing capable of intelligence we must call soul, and soul is invisible, whereas fire, water, earth, and air all are visible bodies. Timaeus

From which again it follows that the world is a likeness of something else.

Plato: Timaeus

Audio/video engineering in both performances, "Plato Now" and "Three-way Communication by Light" by Andy Mann.