Jazz and Imagination:
A Sartrean Approach to Jazz Ontology

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MY FUNNY VALENTINE

C-       C-(9m7)      C-7       C-6

Abmaj7    F-7       D-7 13      G6

C-       C-(9m7)      C-7       C-6

Abmaj7    F-7       Ab9       Bb (9)

Ebmaj7    F-7       G-7       F-7     Eb

Eb7       G-7       C-9       Abmaj7    D-7 13      G9

C-       C-(9m7)      C-6       C-6

Abmaj7    D-7 13      G6

Abmaj7    F-5 (13)   Eb6       (D-7 13      G6)
Ontology and Jazz

-Kane’s (2018) system is built upon cultural reproduction of historically notable recordings

-A recording however is a reduction from the infinite ways a performer could play a tune to the singular sounded music

-How then can we value the performer’s agency in line with performative theories of jazz presented by Floyd (1995) and Monson (1996)?

Figure 8 A model network for 'Body and Soul'.

An example of Kane’s (2018) network-based approach
Sartre’s Theories of the Imagination

-The imagination stems from perceptions of the real world, but allows us to mold the world into a manner that makes sense

-The imagination synthesizes different perceptions together into comprehensible images

-The object of the imagination is not the same as the object is imitates
Jazz and Imagination

- Jazz musicians audiate when they play, meaning they imagine the tune in their head.

- Practicing for a jazz musician means familiarizing themselves to the point of automatic audition with all of the possible ways they can interpret each individual musical symbol.

- Each chord symbol is therefore a representation of the mass of ways the musician could interpret the chord, and thus is what the chord is to that musician.

Three sides of a theoretical “Dmin7 cube”
Jazz As A Three-Step Process

-Step 1: A performer imagines a tune

-Step 2: The performer performs the tune

-Step 3: A listener hears the tune and incorporates the parts they like into their imagination

-Step 1 (again): The inspired listener performs, now with an expanded imagination
Further Avenues

-The imaginative approach I have taken is consistent with both my personal experience as a jazz musician/ethnographic studies of jazz

-The imagination forms the basis of Sartre’s later existential writing

-How can we account for the existential jazz musician? What are the existential realities of the jazz musician?