Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy is an attempt to explore the fundamental structure and significance of human existence. Through his penetrating phenomenological analysis, he has brought to light some of the unique regions of human existence. One of the unique discoveries of his analysis is the transcending character of human consciousness. The most important role of human consciousness, according to Sartre, is its capacity to transcend into the unreal. This view helps us to understand the process of creation and also provides us insight for the appreciation of art.
The aim of this thesis is to examine and analyse this peculiar role of human consciousness i.e. its transcendence into the unreal, and to evaluate the contribution of Sartre to Aesthetics delineating the fundamental character and role of art in human life and society.

The area of research undertaken has been specified in the introduction of the work. It also includes the life and intellectual development of Sartre. Its aim is mainly to frame the problem and to indicate the line of our study of the subject.

In his analysis of existence, Sartre has dealt with various modes of being and their relation to consciousness. This analysis forms the foundation of his whole thought-system. His theory of art could not be explained without having an adequate knowledge of his ontological position. Chapter I is, therefore, devoted to a discussion to the development of existential thought followed by Sartre's phenomenological pursuit of being and its different modalities. It is followed by a discussion of bad faith and its patterns so as to bring out Sartre's 'project of sincerity', i.e. authenticity lying at the roots of an authentic work of art. A brief discussion of Sartre's psycho-analysis has also been added so that his psycho-analysis is distinguished from Freudian psycho-analysis.
Theory of art has its own history. A brief survey of some old theories or interpretations of art was therefore necessary. These theories have been instrumental in developing the contemporary theories of art and have led Sartre to develop his existential interpretation of art. All these discussions form the content of the II chapter of this work.

The study of the ontological and aesthetic position of Sartre has paved the way for an exposition of Sartre's theory of art, which is dealt with in the chapter III of this work. We could not, however, abruptly arrive at Sartre's theory of art without examining his theory of imagination, because his theory of art is essentially rooted in his concept of imagination. Sartre's phenomenological analysis of image has not only helped us to understand his view of the structure of consciousness, but it has provided us with a chance to examine the 'imagining' in historical perspective, i.e. right from the Greeks up to the present time. It is followed by a detailed analysis of Sartre's interpretation of art.

In chapter IV, we have tried to locate Sartre's concept of commitment, authenticity and freedom, which form the core of his theory of art, with reference to his creative writings.
In order to see how far is Sartre's theory of art in conformity with the works of art, we have devoted the 5th chapter to Sartre's analysis of some artists and their works.

Chapter VI is very brief, containing our critical estimation of the validity of Sartre's theory of art.