In the ‘Philosophical Interlude’ separating parts one and two of *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse notes how Freud’s analysis of the instincts is very much in keeping with the scientific rationality of Western civilization. Integral to this rationality is a metaphysics of subject *against* object, self *against* other. In this ‘*a priori* antagonistic experience’, Marcuse writes, objective nature is ‘“given” to the ego as something that had to be fought, conquered, and even violated – such was the precondition for self-preservation and self-development’ (1998a: 109–10). The issue of self-preservation has been considered in relation to the destructive instincts and their repression. In this chapter the issue of self-development, explicitly the relation between self and other, is considered as a key component in the ontology of war. According to Marcuse the antagonistic experience that is central to this self-development receives its greatest treatment in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* which seeks to unfold the antagonism between subject and object, self and other, and seek a path to their overcoming in Spirit. For Marcuse the central argument in the *Phenomenology* is that reason ‘develops through the developing self-consciousness of man who conquers the natural and historical world and makes it the material of his self-realization. [The ego] can become conscious of itself only through satisfying itself in and by an “other”. But such satisfaction involves the “negation” of the other, for the ego has to prove itself by truly “being-for-itself” *against* all “otherness”’ (113). The implications of this conflictual definition of humanity, in which negation becomes the prime mover of self, history and world, will be explored here. It will also be important to examine how, if at all, this concept of negation might offer us a position from which to critique war. If, in this antagonistic metaphysics of world-creation, the ego must prove itself by being against all otherness, is it not this
egoistic philosophy itself that needs to be challenged if violence is to be lessened?

The quote from Marcuse above is of course a brief summation of the famous dialectic between master and slave set out in the *Phenomenology*. Given that self-consciousness exists ‘only in being acknowledged’ (Hegel, 1977: 111), the conflictual dialectic between master and slave becomes the motor for history seen as successive struggles in an ongoing quest for recognition. Published in 1807, the *Phenomenology* was written at a key moment in German history. The Prussian State was defeated by Napoleon at Jena the year before, and it is said that Hegel wrote this work to the accompaniment of Napoleon’s cannons in the distance. In a letter to Friedrich Niethammer, Hegel recounted how on the eve of that battle he “saw the Emperor – this world-soul – riding out of the city on reconnaissance. It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual, who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse, reaches out over the world and masters it”’ (in Franco, 1999: 121). We saw in Chapter 1 how Napoleon was also the epitome of the Nietzschean superman, and the discussion of the Hegelian dialectic here will provide a little more content for both the Nietzschean concept of transvaluation and the Heideggerian polemos.

To relate Hegel’s work to our current context, this chapter considers the master and slave dialectic as it has influenced two other theorists, each of whom, in very different ways, can contribute to our understanding of war. First, continuing the psychoanalytic approach, the chapter explores Jacques Lacan’s appropriation of Hegel and his deployment of the struggle for recognition as a key moment in the formation of subjectivity and the key to explaining human aggression. Secondly, and seemingly something of a departure, the chapter considers how the dialectic of master and slave has been used by Francis Fukuyama in his explanation for war and the dramatic claim that we are living at the end of history.1 While Fukuyama’s work introduces us to the rhetoric that is very much part of the neo-conservative ascendancy in Washington, Lacan’s analysis of subject formation offers the means to challenge the very conceptions of self and other as they appear in that rhetoric. The connection between these two writers is not only Hegel, but the particular reading of the dialectic offered by Alexandre Kojève. Lacan is known to have attended Kojève’s lectures on Hegel delivered at the École des Hautes Études between 1933 and 1939, while Fukuyama would have been introduced to Kojève when studying Leo Strauss. I will begin, then, by giving a brief overview of Kojève’s reading of Hegel before going on to see how Lacan and then Fukuyama might help us understand the logic of war.