Beyond Grasp, Beyond Killing: Ethical Resistance and the End of Powers

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My freedom does not have the last word; I am not alone. (T&I, p. 101)

The Other, whose exceptional presence is inscribed in the ethical impossibility of killing in which I stand, marks the end of powers. If I can no longer have power over him it is because he overflows absolutely every idea I can have of him. (T&I, p. 87)

The center of Levinas' argument is that Ethics always comes first. The face of the Other as ontological sovereign stands prior to thought, prior to language, prior to all reflective movement or intentional involvement. What then, is the true nature of ethical resistance? Ethical power, Dr. Kunz (1998) teaches us, paradoxically exists only as ontological weakness through openness, receptivity, vulnerability, and compassionate presence to the Other. In this paper, I present a reflection on the psychological implications of the ethical resistance of the face of the Other through an analysis of Zimbardo's *The Lucifer Effect* (2007) examination of his Stanford Prison Experiment from 1971 and through R. D. Laing's (1961) exploration of the self and others. Levinas' ethics provides a challenge and a commensurate response to the transformation of human character resulting from pervasive objectification. I include clinical examples of how we, as human beings and as healers, can hold open the possibilities of our own ontological weakness in order to be awake to opportunities of interruption within the processes of objectification through the infinite call to be responsibile for the Other.