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We are held responsible for our deeds - even if we did not act according to our will. From a third-person perspective, to be deemed 'mad' is to be held not responsible for one's actions. From a first-person perspective, to be mad is to feel that one's deeds are not one's own, thus not responsible for them - or vice versa to feel responsible for deeds that are not one's own. The vulnerability to madness, the cypher of *condicio humana*, imbues responsibility: loss of responsibility (alienation) and excess of responsibility (guilt) are the extreme polarities of the dialectics of answerability in human existence. To be human is to be at odds with responsibility, that is, with the involuntary dimension of our being. Responsibility is at the same time a presupposition and a task since society expects a person to feel responsible for her deeds; yet responsibility is not an a priori, rather an achievement to be obtained through education. As Ricoeur puts it: 'Education is education to responsibility'. It is very difficult to disentangle responsibility from non-responsibility and standard assessment procedures are not always helpful for this. Taking the literary case of Musil's serial murderer Moosbrugger, I sketch an alternative view based on the reconstruction of the life-world in which a given action takes place - rather than on the assessment of isolated symptoms. 'To the judge - Musil writes - Moosbrugger was a universe, and it was very hard to say something convincing about a universe'. The judicial assessment of accountability is an 'anaemic concept' if it does not take into account the person's 'universe', that is, the ontological framework in which she is posited.