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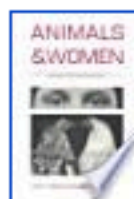
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Sigmund Freud put the issue of human supremacy in perspective in 1917 when he wrote: “In the course of his development towards culture man acquired a dominating position over his fellow-creatures in the animal kingdom. Not content with this supremacy, however, he began to place a gulf between his nature and theirs. He denied the possession of reason to them, and to himself he attributed an immortal soul, and made claims to a divine descent which permitted him to annihilate the bond of community between him and the animal kingdom.”¹ Freud called man’s self-appointed lordship over the other inhabitants of the earth “human megalomania.”²

Several centuries earlier the French writer Michel Montaigne (1533–92) had expressed similar thoughts about “these excessive prerogatives which [man] supposes himself to have over other existences.” He believed that man’s “natural and original disease” was presumption. “The most calamitous and fragile of all creatures is man, and yet the most arrogant....Is it possible to imagine anything so ridiculous as that this pitiful, miserable creature, who is not even master of himself, should call itself master and lord of the universe?”³ His conclusion was: “It is apparent that it is not by a true judgment, but by foolish pride and stubbornness, that we set ourselves before other animals and sequester ourselves from their condition and society.”⁴

This chapter discusses the emergence of the great divide between man and other animals and man’s might-makes-right attitude toward