

Review

Ecological Citizenship Education and the Consumption of Animal Subjectivity

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Abstract: The unfolding of the ecological disaster has led authors to reconsider the position of the human subject and his/her relationship with the earth. One entry point is the concept of ecological citizenship, which emphasizes responsibility, community, and care. However, the discourse of ecological citizenship often reduces the human subject to a critical consumer-citizen and citizenship education to the production of such a subject. The position outlined in this paper provides a more fundamental critique of consumption as a way of being in and relating to the world. In particular, it foregrounds objectification, commodification, and its impacts on human and nonhuman subjectivity and the possibility of care within a multi-species community. The paper brings animal-sensitive work in environmental education research and political theory into dialogue with a more general critique of culture and pedagogy in consumer society. From this perspective, ecological citizenship education seeks to liberate human and nonhuman beings from predetermined behavioral results and functions, and opens the time and space for the subjectification of human and nonhuman citizens within the complex dynamics of a multi-species community. With this proposition, the paper contributes to an ecocentric understanding of ecological citizenship education that builds on the continuity of life and subjective experience.

Keywords: ecological citizenship; environmental education; anthropocentrism; humanism; consumption; subjectivity; nonhuman animals

1. Introduction: The Ecological Crisis and the Question of the Human Subject

The ecological and animal ethical crisis has been associated with a crisis of the Western human subject and his/her relationship to the other-than-human world. Within the social sciences and humanities, the discourses of ecocentric environmental philosophy, critical animal studies, and posthumanist theorizing have explicitly elaborated this connection. Humanism, the great Western achievement and legacy, has become questionable in that the human is seen as the measure of all things and can be defined by anthropina and binary, hierarchical oppositions. They create an unsurpassable gulf between the human proper on the one hand and the partially human, subhuman, and nonhuman Others on the other, and enable the denial of subjecthood and the consequential marginalization, exploitation, and annihilation of the latter. While socio-political advance has been marked by steps to integrate more of these categorical Others, such as women and people of color, as subjects and citizens, humanism ultimately remains limited by what it considers as human. Nonhuman Others are still largely excluded from subject status, and certainly from citizenship status. Humanism's focus on autonomy, instrumental reasoning, and productivity has further obscured the underlying real relations, i.e., the material commonalities and interdependencies between human and nonhuman beings, as well as the power and violence that permeate human–animal relationships, and has displaced alternative ways of being in a more-than-human world.

The human, however, is not only human by way of being a particular animal species, *homo sapiens sapiens*, but also as the result of education. The “anthropological machine” [1] tames the subjectivity of the student by suppressing what he/she share with animal Others, thereby severing any meaningful connection with them. Rather, students have been schooled in formal, abstract, and rational ways of thinking to produce the modern citizen since Plato. The Enlightenment has broadened abstract reasoning to include empirical science in the service of the exploitation of human and nonhuman resources [2]. Under late modern conditions, the end product of humanization is the flexible worker, the informed consumer, and adapted yet active citizen. Dehumanization, the treatment of humans as if they were animals or cogs in the wheels of bureaucracy and capitalism, is “structurally homologous” to humanization in that both depend on “the possibility and necessity of making a determination of whom or what will count as proper subject of politics” [3] (p. 26). Human and nonhuman animals who are on the wrong side of this demarcation lose their subjectivity and voice in a process of objectification and commodification. At the same time, however, the educational institutions managed by the state dehumanize those who undergo humanizing education.

The notion of citizenship is deeply entrenched in humanism. The new discourse on ecological citizenship that seeks to remedy the ecological crisis largely continues this legacy by attempting to fix who the human ecological citizen is and what he/she does within the confines of anthropocentrism. Ecological citizenship stresses responsibility for a common good and an ethic of care towards human and nonhuman others as well as nature more generally (e.g., [4–6]). The discourse particularly highlights the role of consumption and its relations to communities and care. In the light of animal-sensitive work in environmental education (e.g., [7–10]), these visions appear rather narrow.

Part of the discourse on ecological citizenship criticizes the disempowerment of citizens in late modern democracies and their reduction to individualistic, self-interested consumers in globalized capitalism that builds on “unsustainable material accumulation rather than conservation, instant personal gratification rather than prudential social planning, and competition rather than cooperation” [11] (p. 85). However, an “ethics of use” and “self-restraint” [5] (p. 228) or a “self-limiting culture of moderation and responsibility” [4] (p. 166) do not challenge consumption as such. Most theorists remain rather vague as to the exact limits of consumption and how to arrive at criteria for such limits. With an eye to small-scale farming, Barry, for example, proposes to meet human needs through sustainable consumption without “unjustifiable exploitation” of the land and nonhuman animals [5] (p. 7). Where exactly the line between justifiable and unjustifiable exploitation is remains within anthropocentric limits since “care for the environment cannot be independent of human interests” [5] (p. 7). For Dobson, the benchmark for consumption should be the ecological footprint, i.e., the ratio “between the space actually inhabited by a given human population and the ecological space required to sustain it” [6] (p. 100). Such a managerial approach to global environmental citizenship [12], however, does not disrupt the capitalist logic of systemic overconsumption. Instead, the ecological consumer merges with the neoliberal citizen who “is a very active individual, comparing prices, demanding satisfaction from public services, and chasing up failures of service delivery when they occur” [13] (p. 13). This approach forgoes the opportunity to ask more fundamental questions concerning the culture of consumption and consumptive relationships.

Another consideration in the debate on ecological citizenship is the community. Some theorists emphasize communal or local settings that permit egalitarian and cooperative communities, balanced ecosystems, and meaningful interaction between human and nonhuman animals, as well as nature [14]. For others, the rise of new global risks calls for political agreements and regulations on the international level, as well as responsible behavior on the individual level within a cosmopolitan citizenry [15]. Dobson argues for a postcosmopolitan ecological citizenship that lies primarily in our obligations “towards distant strangers, human and nonhuman, in space and time” [13] (p. 8). The extent to which nonhuman and even inorganic life is considered in the ecological concepts of community is diverse and ranges from explicit anthropocentrism to ecocentrism. Dobson, for instance, regards “ecological citizenship as a fundamentally anthropocentric notion” and sees “no need—either politically

or intellectually—to express this relationship in ecocentric terms” [6] (p. 111). Curry [16], by contrast, suggests an ecological republicanism that brings together the human and natural concepts of community. An ecological community includes and respects its members’ perspectives and experiences, its relationships and effects on each other, and its environment (or matrix) that is “held in common by, and affects, all” [16] (p. 1065). Ecological virtue, then, encompasses the recognition and protection of the matrix as the irreducible common good and the “freedom to realize one’s own potential, without arbitrary interference although subject to unavoidable limitations and exigencies” for human and nonhuman creatures [16] (p. 1068). Such a vision resonates with the animal-sensitive research in environmental education and in posthumanist education and its call to include nonhuman beings as subjects in politics and education (e.g., [7–10,17]).

Concepts of ecological citizenship foreground responsibilities and care rather than rights as in the civic republican and the liberal social rights tradition in citizenship theory. Dobson [6], for example, draws on the feminist ethics of care, which points to the fragility of autonomy, self-determination, and agency while stressing the inescapable dependence on others. In the ecological context, this interdependence and the need to care certainly include nonhuman life and nature [18,19]. However, the notion of care is mostly used in an unspecified and unquestioned, i.e., anthropocentric, way. In everyday life, as well as in many academic musings, we are for “caring and empathy while never letting power off the hook” [19,20] (p. 3). In the feminist care tradition in environmental and animal ethics, care implies recognizing the nonhuman Other as a subject, listening and responding to the animal standpoint, and including it as part of the political agenda [19]. If ecological citizenship is reduced to managing our ecological footprint, there is no way of deconstructing our worldview and the cultural and economic practices that have led to the ecological and animal ethical crisis. Care for nonhuman life then remains within the possessive, instrumental, and exploitative paradigm of the capitalist consumer society. Indeed, a “consuming life” [21] actively sabotages the basis of caring relations within a more-than-human community.

The backbone of this paper is the argument that consumer society and the education system under neoliberal conditions contribute to a loss of human and nonhuman subjectivity as the basis for a caring co-existence. Section 2 of this paper will start with a short, critical overview of ethical and sustainable consumption, followed by a more fundamental critique of consumer society drawing on Bauman’s *Consuming Life* [21], and an analysis of the role of nonhuman animals in Section 3. Section 4 will introduce the radical animal ethical vision of Donaldson and Kymlicka’s *Zoopolis* [22], which theorizes nonhumans as citizens, denizens, or citizens of their own sovereign community, and de Giorgio’s zooanthropology [23], which aims at liberating nonhuman animals from the consumptive human approach to them and requires us humans to regain our own subjectivity. The (im)possibility of providing space for the preservation and/or healing of subjectivity within the education system will be discussed in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 will put Biesta’s pedagogy of interruption and subjectification [24] into the context of a multi-species community, arguing that we need to go beyond a narrowly humanist education that seeks to produce an ideal human citizen. Rather, the ecological and animal ethical crisis invites us to see education as a process of subjectification and mutual becoming in a more-than-human world.

This article seeks to contribute to the philosophy of ecocentric education by providing a rigorous animal rights/posthumanist perspective that specifies citizenship and education in a more-than-human world and transcends the dominant consumptive and productivist approach. In particular, it brings a sociological and educational view into dialogue with an animal ethical and zooanthropological view of subjectivity to develop a novel foundation, i.e., one that builds on the continuity of life and subjective experience, for interspecies communities and learning. The theoretical elaboration of subjective experience as a core element of environmental education leads to a deeper understanding of the conditions and dynamics of subjectification and invites further development in the fields of educational practice and research.

2. Citizens in Consumer Society

Consumer-based lifestyles have burgeoned with globalization and the rise of neoliberalism, which suggests that “the market is the sole guarantor of economic growth, wealth generation and political stability” [25] (p. xvii). As the externalities of mis- and overconsumption in the form of social, environmental, ecological, and ethical problems become increasingly conspicuous, responsibility has shifted from producers and states to the citizens through the ethical turn in consumer culture and the politicization of life and lifestyle practices. Practices associated with this aim range from buying fair trade, organic, local, cooperatives, boycotts, downshifting consumption, consumer campaigning and boycotts to anti-consumerism such as the American “voluntary simplicity” movement, veganism, or culture-slaming. The field of activities is thus very heterogeneous and often contradictory with reactionary and progressive undercurrents [26].

Some theorists have welcomed the development of ethical consumption for its possibilities to expand the policymaking process, to reinvent democracy, and reconstitute the private realm as a site for citizenship [27,28]. Other authors have been more critical as economic reasoning and productivism have remained unchallenged and consumption itself sacrosanct [29]. Ecological problems are seemingly solved with better production, improved technology, and new products. The mainstreaming of ethical consumption has been exploited by the market through “affirmative purchasing” [30] (p. 413) and greenwashing [26] to benefit from consumers’ sense of social and ethical obligation. The ethical consumer has also become popular with governments who propagate the informed, reflexive, and calculative consumer-citizen as the agent of politico-cultural change while they are themselves withdrawing from their ecopolitical responsibility [31] (p. 8).

In this context, the actual chances of effecting an ecological and ethical change beyond a market niche seem slim. Consumers are only one node within a commodity chain of creation, distribution, use, and disposal, along which many decisions that are taken by other actors. Thus, a contextualized understanding of the ecological and ethical implications of the consumer choice is lost, and perfect or near-perfect information for rational and sovereign consumer decisions is impossible. Further, consumer choices are embedded in social contexts (media, advertisements), social structures and cultural practices that make consumption “convenient, rewarding, and even necessary” [29] (p. 15). Commodities can be markers of “love and care” [32] (p. 19), as well as social distinction, and are continuously “de- and re-fetishized” [31] (p. 19), suggesting that ethical consumption remains squarely rooted in consumer society and culture. As such, it might more appropriately be seen as “gestur[ing] towards change rather than [. . .] a form of political practice that constitutes in and of itself a significant threat to dominant socio-economic structures” [33] (p. 47). In this vein, it seems more interesting to analyze the impact of consumer culture and society on our interspecies relationships and communities.

The “society of consumers” addresses its citizens primarily as consumers, and includes them according to their consumerist performance. Under the regime of consumerism, “human wants, desires and longings [are] the principal propelling and operating force of society, a force that coordinates systemic reproduction, social integration, social stratification and the formation of human individuals, as well as playing a major role in the processes of individual and group self-identification and in the selection and pursuit of individual life policies” [21] (p. 28). Consumerism is a feature of society. It detaches needs and desires from the individual and reifies them into an external force that drives individual behavior, lifestyles, and life strategies. Happiness is not tied to the gratification of needs but to the “prompt use and speedy replacement of the objects intended and hoped to gratify them” [21] (p. 31). The perpetual non-satisfaction of consumers matches the ever-increasing mass of novel commodities, which exceed any existing demand and application, and the ever-growing landfills. Consumption has become “the human mode of being-in-the-world” that determines “the style and flavor of social life” and sets the pattern of interhuman and, it should be added, interspecies relations [21] (p. 26).

Social integration based on consumerism is comparable to a swarm rather than a group with leaders and hierarchies of authority. “Swarms [. . .] assemble, disperse and gather again, from one

occasion to another, each time guided by different, invariably shifting relevancies, and attracted by changing and moving targets" [21] (p. 76). The social formation of swarms does not demand loyalty, obedience, or a sacrifice of freedom. Dissent, confrontation, and discussion, which are constituents of the public space, dissolve as tensions and contradictions are absorbed and recycled and rebels simply leave the swarm. At the same time, responsibility for the consequences of one's choices and actions has shifted to the individual. However, responsibility is the opposite of the freedom celebrated by consumer society and tends to boil down to a responsibility for oneself. It loses sight of the Other as the object of moral concern. From this perspective, ethical consumption and consumer activism appear more like a display of individual achievement [21]. In his analysis of the possibility of a planetary responsibility, Bauman concludes that "the consumer is an enemy of the citizen," since he/she is not interested in acquiring and exercising the social skills necessary to build and rebuild interhuman bonds, to play the political game and to "influence the game's objectives, stakes, and rules" [34] (p. 189f).

Interhuman relations often resemble the relations between consumers and their objects of consumption. Objects of love that do not live up to these expectations are either not bought in the first place or discarded and replaced after purchase, such that the search for a partner becomes an "emotionally removed activity," "as if people were chops in a butcher's window" [21] (p. 103). This statement is, of course, typical for the anthropocentric and speciesist approach in Western theorizing, which sees the killing and consumption of livestock as "natural, normal and necessary" [35], and quite separate from interhuman relationships and practices. Critical animal studies, however, have demonstrated the intersectionality of discrimination and exploitation [36,37]. In such a consumerist relationship, the necessity to care for others and to be cared for by others seems like an unbearable burden of responsibility, infringing on the desire and need to be flexible and free. This tendency casts a shadow of doubt on the multiple invocations of care in the discourse on ecological citizenship. A relationship, by contrast, that is lasting and caring entails love and "non-routine activity and behavior, as well as constant attention to one's partner's intrinsic nature, an effort to comprehend his or her individuality, and respect" [21] (p. 22).

However, it is not only the Other who is treated like a commodity. Consumer society leads individuals to "recast themselves as commodities: that is, as products capable of catching the attention and attracting demands and customers" [21] (p. 6; original emphasis). Consumerist performance being the overriding criterion for inclusion and social recognition consumption is not primarily aimed at the satisfaction of needs and desires but at the commoditization and constant recommodification of the consumer. Commodities and the "ways of handling of tasks and responsibilities" are chosen for their effects on oneself as a sellable commodity [21] (p. 58). Subjectivity itself becomes a commodity, i.e., the process of recommodification engulfs subjective experience in the incessant attempt to be noted and acknowledged in this sea of mass consumption. Karl Marx used the notion of commodity fetishism to express the hidden human substance of the society of producers. Similarly, Bauman's "subjectivity fetishism" highlights the "commoditized reality of the society of consumers": "What is assumed to be the materialization of the inner truth of the self is in fact an idealization of the material-objectified-traces of consumer choices" [21] (p. 14f). Enticing the individual to confuse play-acting with real life, consumerism makes it increasingly difficult to subjectively experience real life with an openness to the unknown.

3. Consuming Animals

Based on this critical analysis of consumer society, the following section will highlight the ways in which nonhuman animals are subjected to commodification and implied in human self-commodification and subjectivity fetishism. The examples range from the production and consumption of meat, in which nonhumans are obviously objectified, to zoo animals and companion animals, who are managed and trained for specific performances to fulfill human desires and thereby lose their status as subjects. At the same time, however, humans also forego their possibility and ability of subjective experience.

3.1. Commodification

While animals have always been killed and used by humans, modernity with its new form of commodity relations has turned them into sheer objects. Commodification and exploitation of animals drives capitalist production and commodity fetishism, undermines any meaningful relationship between humans and nonhumans, and robs the latter of their intrinsic value by reducing them to surplus value.

After the Second World War, meat played an exemplary role as a factory-produced mass commodity and pillar of the economy. Henry Ford's car assembly line was modelled on the moving lines that had been operating in the slaughterhouses of Chicago and Cincinnati since the 1850s. Meat also assumed an important ideological role in the formation of the "new consuming subject" by being readily available to the broad middle class as one of the material expressions of prosperity [38] (p. 22). With the globalization of production since the 1980s, mass animal confinement and slaughter have spread across the globe. In 1991, the introduction of the Goldman Sachs Index turned agricultural products including live animals into an abstract formula, thereby severing the relationship between demand and supply in animal-based production. In accordance with Bauman's more general observation that production "is bound to overshoot any target made in the measure of already recorded demand" [21] (p. 38), supply and demand in animal-based production is driven by global finance transactions of international banks and shareholders [36] (p. 216). The post-Fordist era has seen the flourishing of techno-science, which goes beyond animals as mass-produced commodities to use animals for the production of living human organs or designer drugs [38]. Violence against animals is institutionalized by the "global animal industrial complex" [39], i.e., a network of governments; corporate bodies in agriculture, biotechnology, and veterinary and human medicine; the pharmaceutical industry; pet and food industries; producers of facilities; and equipment for the breeding, fattening, and slaughter of animals; and scientific institutions. The capitalist state spends billions of dollars/euro to subsidize the dairy and meat industry and animal-based research, sets dishonest "ethical" standards for the treatment of "laboratory animals" and livestock, and protects animal-based industries from social movements that denounce their practices [38,40]. The strategies of the animal industrial complex in the face of environmental and ethical criticism include propaganda campaigns and political lobbying that present consumers' care for the welfare of animals as sentimental and misguided. In line with Bauman's observation of consumer society's "capacity to absorb all and any dissent" and "to recycle it as a major resource of its own reproduction, reinvigoration and expansion" [21] (p. 48), the animal industrial complex has turned care for animals to their own advantage and capitalized on deceptive slogans like "humane slaughter" and "happy meat." Thus, caring consumers are easily led to feel good about consuming animals and are at the same time contained by product differentiation and niche marketing, while the animal industrial complex can continue business as usual. Even veganism, strictly opposed to the commodification and use of animals, is experiencing a mainstreaming through the increase in vegan commodities and commodification as a "chic lifestyle choice" [41,42]. Bauman's ironic remark that politics becomes "a means to inform the world of their own virtues, as documented for instance by iconoclastic messages stuck to car windows or by ostentatious displays of conspicuously 'ethical' consumption" [21] (p. 108) finds its concrete example in a popularized vegan lifestyle that is largely depoliticized. A political ethics of care [19,43], by contrast, would highlight the commodification of animals and humans as a basic feature of capitalist consumer society and the intersectionality of the violence against nonhuman animals, nature, immigrant workers, women, and indigenous people in the production of meat.

3.2. Commodity Fetishism

All these exploitative relations are well hidden by commodity fetishism, through which the capitalist process of production and exchange disconnects the value and meaning of objects from their social and material origins. The economic and cultural value attached to them appears as their essential being and the social structures and processes are reified and therefore unquestionable.

Commodity fetishism not only pertains to the goods themselves but also has a great effect on our relationships with animals and nature since it detaches the consumer from the animal's living body and subjective experience. The "absent referent" [37] of beef burgers, pork chops, and chicken nuggets allows intensified production and marketing of animals without much public resistance. However, even more visible displays of the violence against animals and the unscrupulous profitmaking with animal suffering such as road kill candy and road kill toys is demoralized by "presenting us with an endless flow of depthless images that often produce sated detachment or disorientation rather than empathy and commitment to social change" [44] (p. 62). How can the ecological citizen develop empathy and care if he/she is conceptualized as consumer and the predominant relationship with nonhuman animals is a consumptive one that robs them of their subject status?

3.3. Commodification of Love

Far from being a benign strategy for developing responsibility and empathy for nonhuman animals in children, even the keeping of companion animals, those we supposedly care for, is problematic in the context of consumerism. The commodification of the Other in our "liquid love" [45] is literally applicable to our companion animals. We choose and buy them according to our preferences and expectations, we express our love and care for them in the form of commodities, such as toys, collars with jewelry, coats, and Christmas presents, as the soaring profits in the pet industry testify. Love and care pertain very little to the animals themselves, their intrinsic value, socio-cognitive needs, and subjective experiences. Rather, they relate to our projections and expectations toward them to be cuddly and affectionate, mediators of social status and identity, obedient, undemanding and generally fitting into our lifestyles and daily routines. This kind of love has "anthropo-formative and homologizing" consequences and destroys the "contents of alterity to make a fetish that, even if cuddled and babied, cannot become a life companion since it is stigmatized" as companion animal [46] (p. 181). The dominance of this consumptive approach becomes particularly obvious and dramatic when the nonhuman animal turns out to be a flawed commodity and is disposed of. Every year, millions of shelter animals are "put to sleep," as is it euphemistically called.

A man brings his cat to the shelter. She has lived with him for eight years. She is an attractive example of an unusual breed and once flattered his sense of himself as an exotic personality. But he has redecorated, she sheds, the color scheme fails to disguise it anymore, he will not be bothered to groom her, and he has discovered a short-haired exemplar of a more unusual breed. He hopes the shelter can find her a good home, and then he leaves. [. . .] Then comes [a] dog to the shelter, an energetic one-year old who entertains himself through shoe chewing and hole digging. His guardians have tried keeping him both inside and out without change in his habits. He is alone eleven or so hours each day. Man and woman, his supposed companions, work long hours, lead busy lives, and do not have much energy left for him [. . .]. They had hoped he would be a relaxing diversion from the pressures, [. . .] but instead he makes demands and has needs and does damage. They leave him with relief; he was a wrong choice and an extra stress. Maybe a cat will do. [47] (p. 16)

While it is easy to blame the individual for moral failure, it is at least equally important to consider how consumer culture pervades and colors our relationship with nonhuman animals. The commodity "animal," however, not only determines how we treat living beings but also how we use them in our self-commodification.

3.4. Self-Commodification

One instance of the use of nonhuman animals in the struggle for social recognition is the demonstration of our relationship to animal products. The consumption of meat, especially red meat, is "a symbol of patriarchy resulting from its long-held alliance with manhood, power, and virility" [37,48,49]. Men eat more meat than women and integrate their pro-meat attitudes in a set

of norms that include strength, toughness, athleticism, dominance, emotional restriction, and denial of animal suffering [48] (p. 370). On the other end of the spectrum is veganism, in which the self is styled through critical modes of consumption. Some vegan celebrities choose to market their ethical consumption choice, thus being able to contribute to public debate and education. However, self-marketing strategies differ with respect to the prominence of this aspect of their identity and the radicalness with which the ethics and politics of meat consumption is publicly questioned. After all, this strategy influences their success as celebrity commodities as both the media and the public prefer veganism to be “presented as a diet that does not include a moral agenda” [41] (p. 779). This is yet another example of how consumer society easily integrates and exploits dissent by robbing it of the ethical and political dimension.

There is also a strong dimension of self-commodification via pet keeping, although the predominant reason for keeping companion animals given by their guardians is companionship and love. Throughout history, it has been associated with membership in the upper class insofar as the ownership of “non-functional and expensive animal property” expressed one’s “power and economic resources” [50] (no page). By comparison, keeping pets in the lower classes was seen as wasteful, inappropriate, and often subject to criticism and interventions by the middle class [51]. Because they are expensive to buy and maintain, pedigreed dogs and cats, as well as horses, can still function as a marker of social status [52]. Companion animals also communicate gender identities and norms [53,54], as well as the guardian’s (desired) personality and temperament [53,55]. They further expand the opportunities to enter social encounters and situations such as dog parks, breeder organizations, competitions, and training classes, which afford the guardians self-definitional information and social recognition [50]. Although in most cases, companion animals have the status of a person and family member, these aspects of commodification as part of their owners’ self-commodification makes them vulnerable to disciplining, violence, or disposal if they do not fulfill the owner’s expectations. This may be the horse who does not perform well enough, the dog who has developed socially problematic behavior, or the cat who simply no longer fits the lifestyle of the guardian, as illustrated in the quotes above.

3.5. Subjectivity Fetishism

Another important concept of Bauman, subjectivity fetishism, applies to human–animal relationships and further exposes the superficiality of our love and care for nonhuman animals. The confusion of the material, the objectified, the performance, and appearance with subjective experience is evident in human–animal encounters and relations. In what she calls “captive consumption,” Traci Warkentin describes her “experiences” in various swim-with-dolphin programs:

[M]uch of the time was spent waiting for my turn among a group of four to eight other participants. When called upon, I stepped up, did what I was told, like “kissing the dolphin,” waited as my photo was taken and stepped back to let the next person go. It felt like being on a kind of conveyor belt and going through the motions as per an intended script. I was told exactly where to stand, when and precisely how to perform actions, much like the practice of blocking used in acting. And like the purpose of hitting your mark, the precision of the swim interaction was mainly to ensure that the perfect photo was taken of each pose by the professional photographers at hand. The dolphin encounter felt like a staged photo shoot much of the time.” [56] (p. 100f)

The scripted activities and encounters produce constructed, “idealized, generic tourist experiences” [56] (p. 101) based on the commodification of animal and human bodies. However, the scripted and predetermined experiences seem to strengthen the visitors’ impression that they are really making the fantastic experience they had hoped for. They do not appear bothered by the discrepancy between their formal performance and the lack of “opportunity to exercise unmediated reciprocity or engage spontaneously in mutually interesting ways” [56] (p. 109) with the animal subjects.

Similarly, Teresa Lloro-Bidart [57] gives an in-depth account of the carefully monitored, regulated, surveyed, and sanitized interactions between the visitors of the Lorikeet Forest of the Aquarium of the Pacific in California and the birds. One aspect of the “biological and spatial management of animal bodies, as commodifiable forms of biopower” [57] (p. 391) is the provision of nectar for purchase by the visitors, which entices the birds to land on the visitors. The birds’ dependence on the visitors for food produces a short bodily contact with the visitors, thereby satisfying the visitors’ desire for entertainment and contact with “nature.” As in the case with the dolphins, however, the setting does not allow for subjective experience, neither for the animals nor for the visitors.

In both examples, the animals are kept captive and forced into interaction with humans through training or food-dependence. While they may be seen as actors when they come close, let themselves be touched or bite visitors, I propose that there is no subjective experience taking place. The latter is dependent on “ethical affordances” [56] (p. 104ff), i.e., the opportunity for choice and intrinsic motivation, as well as socio-cognitive and emotional preservation and expression [57]. These settings clearly do not provide ethical affordances, but rather produce reactive behavior in the animals to satisfy consumer expectations of an entertaining zoo visit and encounter with the nonhuman animals. However, it is not only the animals who are robbed of their subjective experiences but also the human visitors, who simply react on their own projections and the management practices of the zoos. The visitors’ formal performance hides “the commoditized, all too commoditized reality of the society of consumers” [21] (p. 14, original emphasis). It does not allow for the development of curiosity as such, let alone curiosity for the Other as a subject, for mutually interesting engagement and shared experience. Such a curiosity “always means exposing oneself to the unknown: as if giving a hostage to fate” [21] (p. 17). The unknown concerns one’s own as well as the Other’s self and subjective experience. The unknown further encompasses the responsibility the Other calls forth, thereby providing the basis for a more-than-human community. Unfortunately, openness to the unknown can severely endanger one’s project of self-commodification and is therefore avoided.

The relinquishment of subjective experience in human–animal relationships is manifestly not limited to commercial settings such as zoos. While animal-based edutainment within a capitalist frame has to ensure customer satisfaction by excluding unpleasant or unpredictable events [57], the same focus on performance at the expense of subjective experience can be found in most relationships with companion animals. They are restricted in their possibilities to satisfy their socio-cognitive and emotional needs and are trained to perform and meet the humans’ projections and desires and to neatly fit into the humans’ daily routines and social requirements. While open violence in human–animal relationships is at least in theory delegitimized in Western societies, and the discourse predominantly refers to love and care, we are not ready to give up our control over and manipulation of our animal companions. Modern (behavioristic) methods of training and disciplining animals appear humanized, yet they are not innocent with respect to their effects on the animals’ socio-cognitive and emotional well-being and their possibilities to make subjective experiences. The mechanical process of producing a behavioral result via negative or positive reinforcement leads to the loss of intrinsic motivation, the ability to understand a situation, to express themselves, and to act according to their own preferences [58]. Training and conditioning are not intended to empower and liberate an individual but to serve the purpose of the trainer and/or system [22,58]. This is not only true of nonhuman but also of human animals.

The punishments and rewards distributed according to consumerist performance are strong reinforcements that produce behavioral results. Behavior, then, is not so much an expression of one’s subjective experience but of one’s self-commodification. The negative effects of the gold stars, A’s, praise, and other forms of incentives and bribes on intrinsic motivation, sense of ownership, curiosity, creativity, risk-taking, cooperation, and responsibility have been widely documented [59]. Individuals who are overly self-controlled and self-disciplined tend to be compulsive and joyless having lost “the basis for spontaneity, flexibility, expressions of interpersonal warmth, openness to experience, and creative recognition” [60] (p. 169). Too much control, even in the form of self-regulation, leads to inner

conflict, anxiousness, and drivenness. These individuals remain locked in a means-to-end logic and performance orientation that confirm the socio-political status quo and do not allow for a satisfying life beyond an unremitting sense of purpose, effort, and achievement.

When it becomes more important to prove dominance over a horse, what does that mean for her possibilities of subjective experience and self-expression and our possibilities for shared experiences? When it becomes more important to look cool in a selfie with a bear behind bars in the background than to experience that bear as a subject with a life-world on his own, what happens to our care for the bear and our responsibility toward him, his species, and his habitat? If self-commodification and subjectivity fetishism take the upper hand, we lose the ability to make subjective experiences ourselves and with human and nonhuman Others as a basis for entering into dialogue and participating responsibly in the more-than-human community. Indeed, in the work of the Frankfurt School, the human–animal relationship was the lynchpin of their power analysis. Instrumental reasoning produces (self-)commodification, exchangeability, and alienation on the human side and total exploitation on the animal side. The domination of nonhuman animals includes the domination of humans because in order to subject external nature, the human must subject his/her own internal animality [61].

4. Animal Citizens

From this perspective, the consumer-citizen does not seem a promising expression of ecological citizenship. A radical challenge of consumer society and of our consumptive approach to nonhuman animals and nature more generally must be a centerpiece of ecological citizenship (education) and followed up by a reconsideration of alternative kinds of relations within the ecological community. Since suggestions to emphasize responsibility, obligations, and care in concepts of ecological citizenship remain rather vague and therefore inconsequential (we all care, after all), a theory of animal citizenship is needed [22]. Donaldson and Kymlicka propose negative and positive animal rights based on our differentiated relations with them and provide a clearer vision of what care might mean and what it affords of the human as co-citizen and of citizenship education. Defining these rights sets the conditions under which human–animal relationships can be non-exploitative and non-consumptive but instead respectful, caring, and mutually enriching. In addition to negative universal animal rights, such as the right not to be owned, killed, confined, tortured, or separated from one’s family, there are positive obligations, such as respecting animals’ habitats and considering animals’ needs, when we design neighborhoods or rescue animals from unintended harm. These duties arise “from the more geographically and historically specific relationships that have developed between particular groups of humans and particular groups of animals” [22] (p. 6). The specific type of relationship constitutes a corresponding set of positive duties.

In order to form appropriate political relationships with wild animals who avoid human contact and maintain an independent existence, we should see them as a sovereign community. The vulnerabilities of wild animals and their habitats largely result from human activity and give rise to negative moral obligations toward them. These include direct, intentional violence such as hunting, fishing, trapping for zoos or exotic pet keeping, killing as part of wildlife management, and habitat loss and destruction that robs animals of the space, resources and ecosystem viability that is the basis of their survival. Nevertheless, there are also positive obligations to assist wild animals individually, as a species or a system (e.g., habitat restoration) [22] (p. 156f). The key issue for the ecological citizen is to respect the wild animals’ right of occupation of and sovereign control over their territory as well as their political agency, i.e., ability to “pursue their own good, and to shape their own communities” [22] (p. 170). Contrary to the common consumptive approach to wild animals and their habitats, this approach excludes colonization, invasion, and exploitation and paternalistic management. In cases of shared or overlapping sovereignty, ecological citizens are called upon to develop a political practice that accommodates ecological viability, migration, and mobility patterns;

the interests and self-determination of animals; and “possibilities for sustainable and cooperative parallel co-habitations” [22] (p. 191).

There are further wild animals who live around or in human settlements, suburbs, and even city centers. Some of them do so because humans have converted their habitat for their own use or have encircled their traditional space. Others are synanthropes who choose to live near or among humans because of the opportunities for food, shelter, and protection. These liminal animals are often stigmatized as invaders or pests and subject to trapping, relocation, and mass extinction because they are not seen as legitimate inhabitants. Buildings, traffic, fences, pollution, etc., cause further unintended harm, since urban planners and designers do not consider the liminal animals. Donaldson and Kymlicka characterize the relationship between humans and these liminal animals as denizenship. It is different from wild animals’ sovereignty in that they share human space and different from domesticated animals because the relationship is less intimate and cooperative. Denizenship therefore calls for a reduced set of rights and responsibilities compared to the domesticated animals, albeit one that accommodates the distinctive interests of these liminal animals [22] (p. 214).

Domesticated animals are best understood as co-citizens in a shared political community. Since humans introduced and integrated them in human society through domestication, these animals have the right to reside in our shared community and have their interests counted in the deliberation of the public good [22] (p. 58). Sharing and co-shaping community, however, presupposes a number of legal, political, and social arrangements, which enable agency and participation. Among these are the freedom from confinement and restraint, the freedom to share public space, protection from violence and use (in the form of animal products and animal labor), care for basic needs (shelter, food, medical care), access to basic socialization into a multi-species community, and freedom from physical and psychological manipulation (i.e., training) [22] (p. 122ff). Only under these conditions can animals make subjective experiences based on their intrinsic motivation and socio-cognitive needs, express their subjective good, and exercise agency. As discussed above, not every behavior constitutes agency. Instead, it is often a performance devoid of inner experience and meaning and geared toward the fulfillment of human expectations [58]. The importance of political agency in the ideal of citizenship must therefore be complemented by a focus on subjectivity. Where Donaldson and Kymlicka draw on the contemporary disability movement to suggest the concept of “enabled citizenship” and “assisted agency,” subjectivity must be included. Subjectivity and agency “should be seen as something that inheres in a relationship amongst citizens, not as an attribute of individuals that exists prior to their interaction. [. . .] Rather, entering into relations of citizenship is, at least in part, entering into relationships that involve facilitating the [subjectivity and] agency of our co-citizens” [22] (p. 60).

Facilitating nonhuman subjectivity and agency affords us humans the opportunity to radically question our consumptive approach to animals: animals as commodities, animals as assets in self-commodification and, maybe most challenging, animals as victims of our subjectivity fetishism. Recognizing that animals are not robots driven by stimulus–response mechanisms or puppets on our strings, but rather owners and creators of their own experiences and protagonists of their own life, challenges us humans to break through our own conditionings and projections. It means letting go of our desire to apply methods and routines in order to produce specific performances and results. This recognition invites us to create the possibility for the animal Other to find her/his own understanding of a situation and to express himself/herself [58]. However, this presupposes that we regain our own subjectivity, ownership of our own experience, and the ability to recognize the subjectivity of the animal Other.

In the philosophy of education, and more specifically in animal-sensitive, posthumanist environmental education research, the tendency toward the dehumanization of human subjects and the marginalization of nonhuman subjects have been problematized. The following section will therefore revisit this critique and then present ecopedagogic possibilities that seek to enable subjectivity in human–animal encounters.

5. Educating for Consumption or Subjectivity?

A number of authors from various philosophical traditions have accused the education system of objectifying and functionalizing students in order to fit them into the prevailing social and economic order and power structure, thereby inhibiting the ownership of subjective experience and a caring and liberating relationship to the world. Paolo Freire [62] describes the banking model of education as alienating and oppressive. In this teacher–student relationship, students become containers to be filled by the teacher. In the process, content becomes “lifeless and petrified,” reality “motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable” and “completely alien to the existential experience of the students” [62] (p. 71). As a consequence, students simply adapt to the world and serve the interest of oppression. They are “merely *in* the world” rather than living “*with* the world,” “*with* others in solidarity” [62] (p. 75, orig. emphasis). Ivan Illich similarly speaks about “treatment” that defines education and confounds “teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence” [63] (p. 1). This confusion turns pedagogic relationships into client relationships, urges students to evermore “competitive curricular consumption,” and teaches them to “make their desires conform to marketable values” [63] (p. 41f). While most meaningful learning takes place as participation in settings that are organized around people’s own experiences and resources, “school prepares for the alienating institutionalization of life” [63] (p. 46). This implies that “people lose their incentive to grow in independence; they no longer find relatedness attractive, and close themselves off to the surprises which life offers when it is not predetermined by institutional definition” [63] (p. 46).

More recently, Gert Biesta [64] has problematized the neoliberal focus on the measurement of educational “outcomes” and the performance of education systems and schools in educational policy and practice. The dominant discourse on efficiency and effectiveness of educational processes and on technical and managerial questions silences the discussion of the aims, ends, and values of education. Instead, it quietly puts education in the role of the “producer” of predefined identities and subjectivities, i.e., good workers, consumers, citizens, and lifelong learners. The transformation of the relationship between state and citizens leaves the latter as consumers of public services and displaces public deliberation about the public good by consumers’ choice in a market, such as that of educational institutions. While individuals cannot hold schools and governments accountable, “systems, institutions and individual people adapt themselves to the imperatives of the logic of accountability” [64] (p. 59). The culture of accountability jeopardizes mutual, democratic relationships based on a shared concern for the common educational good and political responsibility.

While these analyses remain in an exclusively human sphere, ecopedagogy broadens the view to link the oppressive aspects of consumer culture and the education system with the exploitation of nature and nonhuman animals. Education “that alienates us from life in the name of human domination, the industrialization and exploitation of the earth, success and careers” [65] (p. 17) supports this postmodern culture and foreshadows the ecological disaster. It damages the sense of wonder, belonging, relationship, and care “by reducing learning to routines and memorization, by excess abstractions divorced from lived experience, by boring curriculum, by humiliation, by too many rules, by overstressing grades, [. . .] by too much indoor learning, and mostly by deadening the feelings from which wonder grows” [65] (p. 23). Most important in the context of this paper is the humanistic “self-enclosure” that cannot allow the Other—be it the difficult child, the ethnic Other, or indeed, the uncivilized animal in us and the animal Other—to be “an equal partner on any shared journey the outcome of which old Reason cannot imagine in advance” [66] (p. xi).

Animal-sensitive research in environmental education has revealed rich insights into the processes which undermine the possibilities of shared journeys [9]. Despite children’s particular affinity for nonhuman animals (e.g., [67,68]) and ability to take moral decisions, e.g., about whether or not to consume them [69], socialization and education typically work to separate and subject them to a value hierarchy (e.g., [68,70]). Young children’s media and toys contain speciesist messages, which foreground the existence of nonhuman animals for human pleasure. Animal voices are silenced and their living conditions and contexts are obscured, thereby limiting children’s ability to know and

care [71]. Childcare settings, while appreciative of nonhuman animals as means to further child development, heavily invest in the policing of the human–animal divide [67,72,73]. Thus, it is not surprising that young kindergarten children often talk about animals as subjects, agents, and friends, whereas 10-year-old children tend to feel fear and anxiety toward and sometimes wish harm on animals [74].

The education system with its discipline orientation, teaching locales, and tools further reinforce the marginalization of the nonhuman animal. The almost exclusive concern with cognition and facts, the obsession with humans and human artefacts, the narrowing down of education to measurable output, and the depreciation of out-of-doors experiences crowd out a “fully embodied participation in the more-than-human world,” a cultivation of a “sensitivity to hear and see,” and compassion for all beings [75] (p. 137). Instead, practices like animal dissection in school science classes teach the view that animals are discardable commodities and objects for human curiosity, convenience, and learning [7,75]. The interests of the animal–industrial complex are protected by the dominant food regime in school canteens, the mystification of dietary alternatives, and the normalization of the exploitation and killing of animals [76–78].

Based on the human–animal dualism, the education system thus risks equipping “people to be more effective vandals of the earth” [65] (p. 2). In times of ecological emergency, however, education “needs to become a form of ecological healing–mending ‘all my relations’” [66] (p. 14). An ecological education means preserving students’ (and teachers’) personal wholeness, attending to our relations to nonhuman animals and earth, and understanding how we might live as “citizens of the biotic community” [65] (p. 16). “We cannot think our way back to the earth,” argues Weston [79] (p. 7) and, along with others who diagnose and problematize an “experiential undernutrition” [80] (p. 119) and a “nature deficit syndrome” [81], suggests a more direct experience with nature and animals. Experience here involves rediscovering our own senses that connect us to the “mixed community,” our “rootedness in the nonhuman,” and discovering and immersing ourselves in the “astonishingly wild possibilities of other animals and natural places” [79] (p. 4ff).

Animal-sensitive ecopedagogy provides us with a wealth of ideas how to create free experiential space outside constructed settings and structured time. Gavan Watson [82], for example, describes young people encountering a frog in a nature camp in Canada. It affords them the opportunity to explore where and how the frog lives, what might interest him, and where he is going. Traci Warkentin [83] implements a “slow pedagogy of place” in Central Park in Manhattan, New York, where students observe nonhuman animals over a period of time and keep a nature journal. This project raises awareness of all the nonhuman beings who live in the park and facilitates firsthand experience with animal subjectivity. Kate Rossmanith [84] portrays embodied and place-based learning with respect to knowing-how-to-move in an environment shared with saltwater crocodiles in Queensland, Australia, an endangered and protected but also very dangerous species. Experiences with animal subjectivity can be made in wilderness areas, such as the encounter with “feral sociality” in the Australian outback [85], or close by with birds in a neighborhood lagoon [86], raccoons in a playground [73], and even with a spider in the classroom [87]. Quiet time with animal Others can restore our own ability of subjective experience and of sharing subjectivity with animal Others. This can lead to questioning how we share our life and space with the more-than-human, inviting us to consider whether and how animal others might want to live with us and how we can reconstruct our neighborhoods, habits of eating, driving, and vacationing [79].

A learning space that is characterized by attentiveness and responsivity towards animals engages the whole body in relation and implies an ethics-based epistemology and practice, an “interspecies etiquette” [88]. It not only requires the willingness and ability to listen to the animals’ voices [89] but also a “politicized ethics of care” [19,43] that is sensitive to the contextually and relationally situated (im)possibilities of human and nonhuman subjectivity. Science suggests that humans are actually capable of understanding animals’ expressions of well-being and intentions [90]. In the social sciences

and humanities, this capability is captured with concepts such as “kinaesthetic empathy” [91] and “zoomimesis” [46].

Importantly, however, Constance Russell [92] warns of two pitfalls with respect to the nature experience in environmental education. On the one hand, her own work shows that ecotourists’ constructions of orangutans and whale watchers’ expectations towards the cetaceans greatly influence the experience of the animal Other. Human identities and projections on nonhuman animals come together in “stories” that are interrelated with experience: “The stories we tell ourselves about nature and human/nature relationships influence what, if any, nature experience we seek out, and then our interpretations of such experiences. In turn, these various experiences contribute to the development, reinforcement, and occasional disruption of these stories” [93] (p. 127). On the other hand, she questions the educational practice of treating nature experience “as an isolated activity, a quick fix, a commodity. Provide nature experience, and presto!” [92] (p. 125). With such an approach, the focus is yet again on the production of a performance or result, in this case “enforced compassion” [92] (p. 126). Resonating with David Jardine’s criticism of “experience-as-(hyper)activity” or “experience-as-distraction” [66] (p. 17), one might call the ecotourists’ encounters “experience-as-consumption.” However, this should not be called experience at all, since experience involves the preservation of one’s socio-cognitive abilities and ownership of one’s learning process in a socio-cognitive environment [58]. An experience then rules out reactions to one’s identity and projections on the Other and (conscious or unconscious) attempts to produce a result. If the ecotourist reacts on her own construction of the orangutan, she cannot experience herself in a complex and dynamic environment (that includes the orangutan), nor can she experience the orangutan as a subject. If a person uses a treat to lure a dog, he can succeed in producing a behavior that he can interpret as “showing affection.” However, the act of offering a treat is a reaction on the person’s projection that a dog must show affection. His action follows a script that no longer offers the opportunity to experience himself in relationship with the dog. Nor does he enable a subjective experience for the dog since the dog also gets trapped in a stimulus–response mechanism. Therefore, experience depends on the ability to create the opportunity for subjectivity for oneself and the other [58].

6. Conclusion: Enabling Subjectivity—Enabling Ecological Citizenship

Within this posthumanist and zooanthropological frame, Biesta’s pedagogy of interruption and subjectification further clarify the educational dimension [24]. He sees the problem of humanism in the determination of what it means to be human, which limits the possibilities of different kinds of subjectivity and different ways of being in the world. In late modernity, capitalism creates a specific form of subjectivity, namely that of a consumer. The role of the consumer, which has become deeply internalized and feels perfectly natural, masks the processes of self-commodification, commodification of human and nonhuman others, and subjectivity fetishism.

Stepping out of these processes means shifting attention from who or what the human being is to “where the subject, as a unique, singular being, *comes into presence*” [24] (p. 41; orig. emphasis). This does not simply imply the presentation of a pre-existing identity, but presupposes one’s disclosure in encounters with others who are equally enabled to act. The coming into presence takes place in a dynamic process of acting and suffering the responses from the others. It is therefore an open-ended and unpredictable process. Drawing on Levinas, Biesta further places the coming into presence in an ethical space, in which the being-with-others and primordial responsibility precede the subject. The opportunity for an ethical being-with-others particularly presents itself at the boundaries of the subject’s community or in liminal situations, where she/he meets the stranger, i.e., the subject who is marginalized or excluded by the community’s categories, language, theories and methods. Subjectivity, the basis of citizenship, “depends on the rights of the stranger and not on the answer to the question who is entitled—the state or the tribe—to decide who the strangers are” [24] (p. 61, citing Bauman). Subjectivity and the possibility of coexistence with the stranger then require a transgression

of the (language) community: “Not the ego as a rational mind, as a representative of universal reason that possesses the a priori categories and the a priori forms of the rational organization of sensory impressions. What speaks is someone in his or her materiality as an earthling” [24] (p. 64, citing Lingis). Exposing oneself, responding, and being responsible to the stranger, which constitutes the subject as an individual being, are indeed only possible if processes of objectification and commodification are interrupted. While students are schooled to speak and function within their specific community, subjectification implies that they find their own unique response in encounters with the stranger, the unfamiliar and different Other. The educational challenge lies in the “creation of a worldly space” [24] (p. 100), where the aim is not to produce predetermined subjectivities and to reproduce the social order, but to continually deconstruct “the community of logic, rationality, order, structure, and purpose” [24] (p. 115), interrupt its practices and open up for plurality, difference, and experimental and experiential responses.

In a more-than-human world, the “coming into presence” requires a radical deconstruction of the human–animal dualism and anthropocentrism [93] that underpins the structural violence against nonhuman animals, the denial of their subjectivity, and the refusal of dialogic, responsible relationships. Our “materiality as an earthling,” or zoomimesis, is rooted in our phylogenetic heritage of multi-species co-existence and an anthropopoiesis, which makes the human being not only open to nonhuman influences but actually dependent on the acquisition of information from outside and its hybrid effects [46] (p. 186). However, it must be excavated through a pedagogy of interruption, which has several implications for learning and teaching.

The first type of interruption concerns the smooth progress and functioning of everyday (school) life. Most of the time, we are too captured in the pursuit of our aims to notice other subjectivities and our impact on their lives and projects. Breaking our unrelenting course of action to become aware of ourselves and the relationalities and dynamics implied in the present moment affords us subjective experience and shared experiences not only with human others but also with nonhuman subjects. An encounter with “animal alterity in their behavioral expression—in perception as well as communication, in motivation as well as cognition—[. . .] not only allows the acquisition of important information on the particularities of nonhumans but beyond this gives way to a field of anthropodecentering because it habituates us to consider the human point of view as relative, that is neither metric nor subsumptive of possibilities” [46] (p. 185).

A second kind of interruption concerns ingrained expectations and projections toward the animal Other. Numerous are the anthropocentric practices that inhibit a coming into presence of and with animal Others, especially by doing something to them or making them do something, such as holding and cuddling the guinea pig, luring or chasing birds, or making the dog walk at heel. They are difficult to unravel, especially where there is an apparent sympathy for the nonhuman animal that hides the refusal to see him/her as a subject [46] (p. 180). The same is true for the constructions of nonhuman Others, as discussed earlier with the orangutans as children, embodiments of pristine nature or photographic collectibles, whales as spectacular performers [92], but also constructions of the horse as a flight animal in need of training or the dog as a pack animal in need of human dominance [58], and the cow and pig as providers of meat [35]. Can we break these constructions and instead become curious in the animal subject, follow her/his interests, and be open for a shared experience [94]? Incidentally, this is the same process as interrupting our projections of students in need of teaching, training, disciplining, or motivation in order to allow the students to come into presence.

A third kind of interruption is necessary with respect to our concept of a pedagogic situation. Unlike the production of predetermined subjectivities or behavioral outcomes, the coming into presence presupposes and aims at the preservation of the children’s and animals’ socio-cognitive abilities. In our teaching routines, we tend to transgress the limits of information a student can ingest and process. The student who dreamily looks out of the window or plays with her rubber risks being reprimanded, and as a result, learns to ignore her limits and perform in a way that satisfies the teacher, e.g., by putting on an interested face. Preserving socio-cognitive abilities means allowing for latent learning

and intrinsic motivation and avoiding strong stimuli or group dynamics that elicit reactive behavior. The same requirements for preserving ownership of the learning process and life more generally apply to nonhuman animals. They, too, need a socio-cognitive environment in which they have the space and time to develop their own interests, make subjective experiences, break for latent learning processes or withdraw before the situation becomes too much and/or reactive [58]. This is only possible when we observe negative and positive animal rights as outlined by Donaldson and Kymlicka [22] and do not force our presence and projects on them, as is the case with animal-assisted pedagogy where trained animals are used to fulfill human-defined purposes. It also presupposes that we develop an acute awareness of the difference between a reactive and a socio-cognitive situation and understanding how to foster the latter for oneself and others. An illustration of a reactive situation is one in which the group dynamic leads children to overwhelm animals with their presence or even start grabbing or chasing them [67,72]. Alternatively, we can suspend our own tiresome monologue or step back from an intense situation and draw attention to the subjectivity of the spider in the classroom or the migrating birds outside to allow for latent learning and subjective experience. We can break the routine of indoor schooling and provide quiet time in the school yard, park, animal sanctuary, or nature reserve to experience nonhuman subjects and explore our shared space. Carving out space for interruptions always already includes the opportunity to create a multi-species “worldly space” for coming into being and sharing subjective experience.

Biesta’s concept of subjectification comes to bear on citizenship education [95]. Concomitant with the traditional understanding of citizenship as a universal set of rights and duties is the assumption that citizenship must be achieved through education, which produces the desired outcome, i.e., compliant yet active citizen-consumers. Such a “citizenship-as-achievement,” however, does not recognize young people’s right to citizenship and participation owing to their already existent role in and lived experience with society. By contrast, Lawy and Biesta suggest a “citizenship-as-practice” that already routinely involves everybody in public dialogue inside and outside of the education system. Research shows that the most successful models of citizenship learning are based on “citizenship communities” [95] (p. 39), where this particular citizenship ethos pervades the whole organization and wider community. They provide space and place for young people “to nurture and explore their emergent sense of themselves as individual people, and also locate some sense of belongingness and community through their shared identities” [95] (p. 44). Citizenship-as-practice involves innumerable instances of first-hand experiences that are meaningful in their daily lives, preserves the young people’s ownership of their personal learning within a socio-cognitive environment, and facilitates their subjectification. It resonates with Donaldson and Kymlicka’s notion of “enabled citizenship” [22] in that they are both inclusive and relational. However, the latter explicitly aims at a multi-species community. In a more-than-human world, subjectification always also implies a becoming-with-animal-Others and the politicization of care always involves the deconstruction of our anthropocentric, consumption-oriented economy, culture, and pedagogy as it impacts nonhuman lives and communities. Enabling nonhuman and human subjectification and politicization thus constitutes an entirely different approach to ecological citizenship education than the attempt to produce an ecological citizen-consumer. It is not something that can be taught as yet another topic in the curriculum but needs to be experienced and experimented with in one’s own personal journey [94], as well as professionally in the fields of educational practice and research. Only when we can recognize subjectivity do we have the possibility of enabling citizenship, a politicized ethic of care, and a political more-than-human community. Thus, “contaminating” ourselves with animal subjectivity [46] (p. 177) has profound implications for pedagogy, schools, and their wider communities and offers “wild possibilities” [79] for an ethical and sustainable more-than-human-world.

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