THE ARGUMENT FROM MARGINAL CASES
**P1.** It is undeniable that [members of] many species other than our own have ‘interests’—at least in the minimal sense that they feel and try to avoid pain, and feel and seek various sorts of pleasure and satisfaction.

**P2.** It is equally undeniable that human infants and some of the profoundly cognitively disabled have interests in only the sense that members of these other species have them— and not in the sense that normal adult humans have them. That is, human infants and some of the profoundly cognitively disabled [i.e. the marginal cases of humanity] lack the normal adult qualities of purposiveness, self-consciousness, memory, imagination, and anticipation to the same extent that [members of] some other species of animals lack those qualities.

**C1.** Thus, in terms of the morally relevant characteristic of having interests, some humans must be equated with members of other species rather than with normal adult human beings.
SECOND PART OF ARGUMENT

P3. Predominant moral judgments about conduct toward these humans are dramatically different from judgments about conduct toward the comparable animals. It is customary to raise the animals for food, to subject them to lethal scientific experiments, to treat them as chattels, and so forth. It is viewed as morally abhorrent to engage in the same practices for human infants and the [severely] cognitively disabled.

P4. But absent a finding of some morally relevant characteristic (other than having interests) that distinguishes humans and animals, we must conclude that the predominant moral judgments about them are inconsistent. To be consistent, we must either treat the humans the same way we now treat the animals, or treat the animals the same way we now treat the humans.

P5. There does not seem to be a morally relevant characteristic that distinguishes all humans from all other animals. Sentience, rationality, personhood, and so forth all fail. (Rachels argues this).

C2. Therefore, we cannot give a reasoned justification for the differences in ordinary conduct toward some humans as against some animals.
The AMC as I’ve presented it here only shows us that it is inconsistent for us to treat animals and “marginal” human beings differently.

So we have two options: either “level-down” and treat marginal human beings as badly as we treat animals or “level-up” and treat animals as well as we treat “marginal” human beings.

Pretty much all AMC advocates make independent arguments for why “levelling-up” is the route we should take.
CRITICISMS

- Anderson and Diamond are both critics of the AMC, though they both tend to agree with the conclusion that we should treat animals better.

- Diamond and Anderson challenge P5 – the idea that there is no morally relevant characteristic that distinguishes humans from animals. Both Anderson and Diamond think that merely being human is morally important and relevant, and gives all humans higher moral status than all non-human animals.