Section 1

Sentimentalism: emotions or sentiments are crucial to moral judgment.

Hobbesian Subjectivism: “X is wrong” means that “I disapprove of X”.
Counterexample Moral disagreement between individuals.

Humean Community-based Subjectivism: “X is wrong” means “Most people in my community disapprove of X”.
Counterexample: Moral disagreement between communities (and, perhaps, within a community).

Emotivism: “X is wrong” means “I disapprove of X and should too”
Counterexample: People can judge something as wrong without having feelings about it.

General Problem for all Sentimentalist Accounts
The Frege-Geach Problem: Moral judgements (i) can form part of semantically complex sentences, and (ii) can feature in simple instances of moral reasoning.

(i)
[S]uppose that I say, “I feel that I ought to take this book and give it back to Jones.” …You may ask me, “But ought you really to do so?” …and it is up to me to produce my “reasons”...I may reply…“I ought to, because I promised to let him have it back.” And if you continue to ask, “But why ought you really?”, I can answer…“Because anyone ought to do whatever he promises anyone else that he will do” or “Because it was a promise.”

(ii)
If doing a thing is bad, getting your little brother to do it is bad.
Tormenting the cat is bad.
Ergo, getting your little brother to torment the cat is bad.

Neosentimentalism: Moral judgments are a kind of judgment that it is normatively appropriate to feel a certain emotion in response to the action taken.

Gibbard: “what a person does is morally wrong if and only if it is rational for him to feel guilty for doing it, and for others to resent him for doing it” (Gibbard, 1990, p. 42)

On Gibbard’s account, moral disagreement is disagreement about whether or not it is appropriate to feel guilt over a certain action; emotion is retained as part of the meaning of moral judgment; and moral reasoning is about the appropriateness of feeling guilt in response to doing certain actions.

1. Attribute guilt.
2. Evaluate the normative appropriateness of emotions.

3. Combine these two capacities to judge whether guilt is a normatively appropriate response to a situation

Section 2

Dissociation Problem: If moral judgments are judgments of the appropriateness of guilt, then an individual cannot have the capacity to make moral judgments unless she also has the capacity to make judgments about the appropriateness of guilt.

The psychological data that Nichols surveys undermines this picture of moral judgment as young children seem to lack this capacity to judge whether guilt is normatively appropriate for a situation. And the reverse of such children are psychopaths.

Section 3 & 4

20th century sentimentalism / neosentimentalism were influenced by concerns related to the philosophy of language. If we approach emotions not as something to explain semantically, but psychologically, we will fare much better. Emotion concepts do not figure into the content of a moral judgment; rather, emotions play a role in leading us to treat as distinctive certain violations, including many of those we consider "moral," like violations of harming others.

Basic Idea: Core moral judgments depend on two mechanisms: 1) a body of information prohibiting harmful actions, and 2) an affective mechanism that is activated by suffering in others.[1]

Nichols claims we need 1 because there are plenty of cases where we can experience 2 without thereby making moral judgment. (pg 264) Call such a body of information a 'normative theory' which just is a body of mental representations proscribing harmful transgressions that is present in individuals who are capable of core moral judgment. This normative theory grounds our distinction between wrongful and acceptable harm.

While both mechanisms are needed to account for moral judgment, they are not necessarily connected. Again, the psychopath is perfectly capable of understanding and applying the normative theory without having the affective response. Additionally, those younger than two can have the affective response without having the normative theory in place. Though they are separable mechanisms, when they are both established in a person, then moral judgements can be made.[2]

[1] An affective response is, basically, the emotional response one has to a situation (same root as *affection*).

[2] So, while Nichols would not agree with much of Smith's theory, they do agree that amoralists such as the psychopath are *not* making moral judgements. For Smith, that was because term-mastery was not sufficient for judgment, whereas for Nichols it is the lack of an affective mechanism.

Section 5

The account sketched so far also explains why psychopaths are not motivated by a normative theory. The affective deficit results in a deficit in moral judgment *and* motivation. Disagreement, both interpersonal and intercommunal, are accounted for on this version of sentimentalism since the disagreement about the details of our normative theory. Additionally, it is true that people can judge something wrong without having feelings about the action judged. Nichols, however, is quick to point out that while 'online emotional processing' isn't required to make a moral judgment, it usually accompanies it.[3] Finally, we can meet Geach's challenge because it is not our emotions that are at play in moral reasoning, but elements of our normative theory

Section 6

It remains to explain the connection between moral concepts and emotions. Traditional sentimentalists had an independently motivated answer to this—the norms just are the relevant emotions. On the early sentimentalist accounts, subjectivism and emotivism, moral judgment is just reporting or expressing the feelings that you have. Thus, since we have feelings of revulsion at harmful actions and at disgusting actions, it follows that we would have norms against these kinds of actions. The norms are just the emotions. In the more sophisticated neo sentimentalism account, emotional activation isn't required, but the emotion concepts are still part of the very semantics of moral concepts. Either way, for philosophical sentimentalists, emotions are deeply, inextricably embedded in moral concepts.

On Nichol's view the norms are not the emotions. Nor are emotion concepts implicated in the semantics of moral judgment. Rather, norms make an independent contribution to moral judgment. However, now this leaves a bit of a puzzle. If the rules are independent of the emotions, why is it that the rules happen to fit so well with our emotional endowment? Why do we have rules that prohibit actions that we are independently likely to find emotionally aversive? Call this the "coordination problem." To address the problem, Nichols looks away from semantics, and instead looks to history

Affective Resonance Hypothesis

Norms that prohibit actions to which we are predisposed to be emotionally averse will enjoy enhanced cultural fitness over other norms.[4]

While there may be theoretical reasons to favor this hypothesis, actual evidence would be nice. To that end Nichols claims that 'The affective resonance hypothesis predicts that, ceteris paribus, norms that prohibit actions that are independently likely to excite negative emotion

[3] This is the only way that I can make sense of this claim. On page 265 after the bit about online processing, Nichols jumps into a discussion of how emotional mechanisms that give harm norms their distinctive status are defective in the psychopath. So, insofar as there is a direct response to the emotivism counterexample, Nichols seems to be stating that while there is a spectrum of simultaneity between the affective and the normative, so long as the extreme ends are avoided, his theory survives. Thoughts?

[4] Nichols does not claim this to be the only factor in how cultural evolution occurs; but he does claim it is one such factor.

should be more likely to survive than norms that are not connected to emotions.' (pg 270)

Such evidence is to be found, according to Nichols, in the cultural evolution of etiquette. Given his endorsement of the basic nature of the emotion *disgust*, in conjunction with a kind of universal disgust found in bodily fluids, Nichols claims that norms that prohibit core disgusting actions should be more likely to succeed than norms that are not connected to affective response. To this end Nichols cites some *interesting* etiquette manuals, and the same holds for norms against harm.

Nichols concludes by describing what he calls a 'characteristic pattern of [norm] development':

1. Harm norms tend to evolve from being restricted to a small group of individuals to encompassing an increasingly larger group.
2. Harm norms come to apply to a wider range of harms among those who are already part of the moral community - that is, there is less tolerance of pain and suffering of others.