Many ethical concerns pervade contemporary forensic practice. The ethical use of argumentation in intercollegiate debate has been questioned (Duffy, 1983). The ethical practices associated with the recruitment of transfer students has generated considerable discussion (Bartanen, 1988; McGee & Simerly, 1991). And, a host of ethical concerns have been raised regarding multiple practices employed in competitive individual events (Endres, 1988; Frank, 1983; Green, 1988; Thomas & Hart, 1983). As most forensic coaches and competitors can attest, these are but a few of the ethical concerns that generate questions, discussion, and controversy in our field.
A forensic coach or competitor can look in many places for guidance on ethical issues. Most major national forensic organizations offer guidelines for ethical behavior. A number of contemporary texts on forensics provide lengthy discussions regarding ethical practices in the field (e.g., Bartanen, 1994). Other forensic scholarship has attempted to establish new, comprehensive frameworks for the evaluation of ethical practices (e.g., Snider, 1992). But, can the forensic coach or competitor look beyond this field for guidance when confronted by an ethical concern or dispute? Jaksa and Pritchard's text is one of the best of places to look.

Although Jaksa and Pritchard's text is targeted toward students in communication ethics courses, its application can be made to a number of areas including contemporary forensic practice. This text provides guidance and practice in the examination and evaluation of ethical issues that have a communicative component. Indeed, the ideas and concepts discussed in the text can be applied to any form of public communication including debate and individual speaking events.

The nine chapters of Jaksa and Pritchard's text are divided into three broad sections: the need for ethics, methods of reasoning in ethics, and applications and cases. Each section is rich with informative material that illuminates the importance of ethics and the actual methods by which ethical decisions are made. The need for ethics is illuminated with a discussion of the value of the study of ethics, an examination of the post-Watergate crisis in confidence confronting contemporary society, and a positioning of the role that ethics plays in communication. Moral reasoning and the principle of veracity provide the context for the section on ethical reasoning. The section on applications and cases provides detailed illustrations of ethical decisions that might confront individuals, groups, and organizations. The specific case studies in this final section include an examination of the ethical questions surrounding the explosion of the Challenger space shuttle and the individual case of former Watergate conspirator Jeb Stuart Magruder.

The format of the text is readable and practical. The reader can easily follow the reasoning of the authors as they build a case for the study of ethics and then they detail specific methods by which that study can proceed. Further, the practicality of the text
is quite robust. The text deals with a number of real world issues and not merely the musings of theologians or philosophers.

The importance of this text for forensic coaches and competitors can be identified in several ways. Most significantly, any reader receives an informative introduction to the part that ethics can play in public communication, which should not be lost on the forensic coach or competitor. Forensics is still an intense, laboratory experience in public communication. A general recognition and understanding of the role of ethics in such a context can help the forensic coach and competitor in formulating and developing ethical standards to govern or guide their behavior.

The case studies in this text that point to ethical issues for individuals and groups can also be informative for the forensic coach or competitor. The forensic coach must often make decisions that may ultimately effect his or her own ability to secure funding for the program, to secure tenure, and to address other vital concerns. The coach and competitor must understand how to deal with ethical concerns that may influence the team or squad as a whole: recruitment decisions, allocation of scholarships, use of evidence trades, and so forth. The case studies in Jaksa and Pritchard's text are not specific to such forensic scenarios, but they do clearly illustrate the type of ethical reasoning that an individual or group might employ when confronted with the need to resolve an ethical dilemma.

Jaksa and Pritchard also provide a great deal of material that can help debaters to understand better some of the moral and value-based evidence that they may desire to use. A number of moral theories and standards are examined and illustrated at length in the section on reasoning in ethics. This material might enable the debater to understand better (and by extension to argue better) moral and value positions that often arise in both policy and non-policy debate.

If a forensic coach or competitor is looking for a list of shortcuts or easy answers to all potential ethical disputes, then they will be disappointed by this test, for it does not provide lists or reviews of contemporary ethical standards. Rather, the text works in a more heuristic manner, by exploring theory and practice, and it thus compels the reader to continue that exploration through
discussion and application. This is a valuable exploration not only for the broader communication discipline, but for the field of forensics as well.

Works Cited


