A rule is a constraint, but also a hope. Drawing on anthropological and legal theories of rules, this presentation will first address the theory of rules found in a major hermeneutical tradition of medieval India. The philosophy of language in this tradition embodies a mode of ethical thought in which imagined normativity replaces the real. Hindu jurisprudence accepted this view of rules and the presentation will then examine the imaginative impulse in the famous twelfth-century Hindu legal treatise called the Epitome of the Law by Vijnanesvara. Broader comparative questions of the role of imagination in religious law generally will conclude the discussion with reference to the works of Joseph Karo, Gratian, and al-Ghazali.