

## Hypothetical Thinking and the Methodology of Ethics

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### Abstract

The idea of hypothetical thinking as a method in ethics is in allowing one to imagine a situation and then think about the moral significance of the imagined situation; doing so provides guidance as to how the moral significance of the actual situation can be dealt with. While many philosophers adopt this method, Jonathan Dancy, however, rejects this idea. This paper attempts to explain the methodological structure and features of hypothetical thinking in ethics; argue against Dancy's rejection of hypothetical thinking as a method of ethical discourses and reasoning; and explain some relevant meta-ethical issues and difficulties associated with Dancy's rejection, especially the insurmountable difficulty Dancy faces in explaining the normative necessity of moral norms.

**Key Words:** hypothetical thinking, methodology in ethics, moral generalism, the normative necessity of moral norms