

## On “Should”

“Should” is another one of those potentially insidious words (like “have to”). It’s technically the past tense of “shall”, which means “duty, obligation,” but is more commonly used today as future tense. “You should do this,” is an example. Using it in the negative, as in “You should not steal from others” is innocent enough, but my concern is when it’s used in the positive, as in “You should give to charity.” That sentence in particular has the speaker claiming that the listener has a duty or an obligation to give to charity. Duty means “to owe” and obligation means “to bind by law or duty.” In other words, using our last example, to say “you should give to charity” is like saying “you owe (by debt or by law) charity to others,” or even more to the point, “others are entitled to your wealth.” If that’s what is intended by “you should give to charity,” then the speaker and I have a major problem. And that’s today’s two cents.

Skyler.