COLLOQUY


EDWARD and GUDRUN WOLPOW comment on Anil’s article “Anagram Arithmetic”, May 2011, p. 94-99. Anil mentions alphomes: number-names written in alphabetic order (and reverse alphomes). A remarkable and out-of-print book from the MIT Press, Number Words and Number Symbols, A Cultural History of Numbers, by Karl Menninger (1958 first German edition; 1969 English translation) conveniently tabulates and discusses number names of all the world. Some additional alphomes: Hungarian EGY (1); Turkish BIR (1), DORT (4) [umlaut over the O], BES (5) [tiny inverted caret over the S], OTUZ (30); Basque HIRU (3), BOST (5); Cornish DOW (2) -- and the less exotic French CENT (100). Swedish (and Danish, Norwegian) present a special problem since the 3 vowels (Å, Ä, O) [the second A should have an umlaut; the O should have an umlaut over it] appear at the end of the alphabet, giving these languages 29 letters. So, in Swedish, in addition to SJU (7), TVÅ (2) is alphomic, and ÅTTA (8) is a reverse alphome.

ANIL remarks:

T. A. Hall’s list of English pseudoplurals (11-142) included three of especial interest (hive/s, crap/s, measles/s) in that those pairs are not related etymologically. And his welcome addition to the literature of pseudoantonyms with the re- prefix (11-151) inspired me to notice another rich negatory prefix, ex- (as in eccentric, exfoliate), that I had overlooked in my earlier study (11-37). The most synonymous I found, out of fifty pseudos noted, were: exchange (≠), exclosure, excogitate, explant, express (toothpaste), extensile and exterminate. Less ideal are exclaim, ex[one]rated (a definitive charade: it’s the one no longer censured!), explain (make plain—but it looks like it means complicate), extemporary (for the moment), extort (a tort), extractor (a tractor, for example). Another negatory prefix, extra- (as in extraterrestrial) also offers several pseudoantonyms, because extra- and extra are ca. opposites, but no synonyms except perhaps extrasystole (offbeat but yet a systole) and three via puns, extralinguistic (it’s nonetheless a word), extraordinary (extremely ordinary?) and extrasensory (invoking an additional sense[s]).

DAVID DILLON’S two young daughters, Isabella and Vallory, made a card for their father after an overnight stay in the hospital for minor surgery that read “Get Will Soon” David admired the forward thinking conceit.