Paul Hellweg
Northridge, California

Living in a democracy, we are periodically cursed (blessed?) with election year mania. Occasionally, it all seems to amount to naught, and people have been heard to ask: "Isn't there another way?" Of course there is. Different types of government abound. More than eighty varieties are presented below. As you read through them, perhaps you'll find one that sounds a little better than democracy. On the other hand, a look at these alternatives might be enough to renew everyone's faith in the electoral process.

For the sake of this discussion, I have limited consideration to forms of government ending in -archy (Greek "arkhos" = ruler) and -ocracy (Greek "kratos" = strength, power). Admirers of dynasticism, feudalism, tribalism, and related governments needn't fear -- there are regimes here bound to please anyone. To begin with, my personal favorite is LOGOCRACY, "a community or system of government in which words are the ruling power" (OED).

By The Numbers

Everyone knows that a monarchy is a state headed by a single ruler. Lesser-known appellations referring to a specific number of leaders are listed here:

AUTOCRACY, MONOCRACY one ruler
BIARCHY, DIARCHY (DYARCHY), DUARCHY two rulers
TRIARCHY three rulers
TETRADARCHY (TETRARCHY) four rulers
PENTARCHY five rulers
HEPTARCHY, SEPTARCHY seven rulers
OCTARCHY eight rulers
DECARCHY, DECADARCHY ten rulers
DODECARCHY twelve rulers
HECATONTARCHY (HECATONARCHY) one hundred rulers

Oddly, the term HEXARCHY refers to a group of six states, not a government of six leaders. A "nine-archy" appears to be missing altogether; I have checked both the OED and Webster's Third, but have found no listing. I see no good reason why there cannot be a government of nine persons. Perhaps such a government has never existed, but it certainly could in theory. I thus propose NONARCHY (derived from nonary, a notation having nine as its basis).
Additional governments are named in accordance with the percentage of the populace involved. If you think democracy means majority rule, then this list is for you:

ARITHMOCRACY rule of the numerical majority
DEMOCRACY state vested in the people as a whole
ISOCRACY government where all have equal power
OLIGARCHY government by the few
PANTARCHY state vested in the people as a whole
PANTISOCRACY Utopian community where all are equal and rule
POLYARCHY (POLARCHY, POLYGARCHY, POLYCRACY) government by the many, or by a number of persons
SOCIOCRACY government by society as a whole

The Good And The Bad

Some of the governments listed here sound too good to be true. Others, though undesirable, sound suspiciously familiar. The good and the bad are:

ANGELOCRACY by angels
ARISTARCHY by the most qualified people
ARISTOCRACY in the literal sense, government of a state by its best persons
BOBOCRACY by boobs
DEMOCRACY by demons
DIABOLARCHY (DIABOLOCRAKY) by devils
FOOLOCRAKY by fools
KAKISTOCRACY by the worst citizens
MOBOCRACY by a mob
NEOCRACY by amateurs
OCHLOCRACY by a mob or by the lowest of the people
PEDANTOCRACY by pedants

For The Religious

The Moral Majority and friends would probably approve of the governments in this category. But if these are not for you, then you might prefer living in a STATOCRACY: government by the state alone, uncontrolled by ecclesiastical powers. The religious governments are:

HAGIARCHY (HAGIOCRACY) rule by persons considered holy
HIEROCRACY (HIERARCHY) rule by priests or members of the clergy
JESUITOCRACY rule or government of Jesuits
PAPARCHY rule by a Pope
PARSONARCHY rule by parsons
THEARCHY rule by God or a god
THEOCRACY rule by a priestly order claiming divine commission
By Wealth Or Class

This category provides for everyone, regardless of their economic status:

- **CHRYSOCRACY** by the wealthy
- **DULOCRACY (DOULOOCRACY)** by slaves or servants
- **ERGATOCRACY** by workers
- **MESOCRACY** by the middle class
- **MILLOCRACTY** by mill-owners; the body of mill-owners regarded as a dominant class
- **PLANTOCRACY** by planters
- **PLUTARCHY (PLUTOCRACY)** by the wealthy
- **PTOCHOCRACY** by the poor
- **SLAVOCRACY (SLAVEOCRACY)** by slave-owners
- **SQUIREARCHY** by the landed gentry
- **TIMOCRACY** rule by the wealthy (Aristotle); rule by those who love honor (Plato)

By Sex

Both feminists and male supremacists will find a polity to their liking here:

- **ANDROCRACY** government with men as the ruling class
- **GYNARCHY (GYNEOCRACY, GYNAEOCRACY)** government by a woman or women
- **GYNOCRACY** government with women as the ruling class
- **HETAEROOCRACY** government by concubines (hetaeae); government by college fellows!
- **MARTIARCHY, METROCRACTY** society organized with the mother as head, with descent traced through the female line
- **PATRIARCHY** society organized with the father or oldest male as head, with descent traced through the male line
- **PORNOCRACY** government by profligate women

By Age

This category is quite small, but nonetheless worthy of separate consideration:

- **GERONTOOCRACY** by old people
- **PAEDARCHY** by a child or children

Miscellaneous

Here are all the unique governments that defy categorization. Some intriguing concepts appear in this final selection:

- **ATHLETOOCRACY** government by athletes
- **AUTARCHY** government with absolute power
COSMOCRACY rule over the whole world  
HAMARCHY ruling together (distinct parts have individual action, but all parts work together)  
IDEOCRACY government founded on theories or abstract ideas  
KRITARCHY rule of judges in ancient Israel  
NOMOCRACY government founded on system or code of laws  
PANARCHY rule over the entire universe  
PAPYROCRACY government by paper (by newspapers or literature)  
RIOTOCRACY government in which violence and disorder prevails  
STRATOCRACY military government  
SYNARCHY government by joint rule (people have a share in power with their rulers)  
TECHNOCRACY government by experts following rules laid down by technicians  
THALASSOCRACY sovereignty of the sea  
THEATROCRACY absolute power exercised by ancient Athenian democracy  

Conclusion

To my mind, democracy is as good as any of these other governments. But if absolutely none of the above sound good to you, I leave you with one final entry:

ANARCHY no government at all