**In what ways was the democracy of 4th century Athens better than that of the 5th century?**

While looking at the ways in which the democracy of 4th century Athens was better than that of the 5th century, there are several factors that include the focus on policies (on either the domestic front or looking at the Empire), the role of the individual and during what period did he have a greater say in matters, as well as under what era did Athens and the institution of democracy thrive. In this essay we will look at how laws and decrees portray the two epochs.

The 4th century wakes up to a colossal defeat in the Pelopenneasian War against Sparta (Xenophon), along with 2 oligarchic uprisings in 411 and 404 BC. As a result we find that democracy now faced a legitimate threat not only externally but internally as well. Therefore, we see the focus of law and decrees of the 4th century focusing heavily on domestic policies strengthing the institutions at home rather than aiming at proving Athenian supremacy in Greece as they did in the 5th century.

Looking at the Oath of Demophantos that had to be taken by every adult male citizen after the restoration of democracy in 403 BC, we see Athens attempting to strengthen democracy through glorifying each citizen who stops (or kills) a tyrant (or even a potential one) as a hero by even comparing them to the liberators of the tyrannicides Aritrogein and Harmodious. Xenophon records this to have had a significant impact on the Athenians who now saw the protection of democracy as their top priority. Similarly, in the 5th century Athens had forced Chalcis, by the Decree of Chalcis (Fornara 103) in 446 BC to swear to remain loyal and not rebel against Athens. Through the Decree of Chalcis and the Oath of Demophantos we see a transition from a focus on imposing democracy on other cities to strengthening it at home.

While assessing how the 4th century was better than the 5th, along with establishing democracy’s strength, Athens also appears to have made it “more democratic”. Looking at the rewards given to Samos for remain loyal (only one who did) to Athens (Robin Osborne 2), as well as the decree by which the metics who had supported Tharsybolous (Robin Osborne 4) in 403 BC were being rewarded. These inscriptions on marble stele as displayed in Athens (in prominent locations like the Acropolis and Agora) show how the 4th century also became a better democracy for a broader range of individuals. With the reward of those to those that aided in 403 BC, we see Athens rewarding the salt of the earth masses. When compared to Pericles’ law of double decent to qualify for Athenian citizenship in the 5th century, we find that the 5th century (as recorded by Thucydides) focused more on political rivalry and the expansion of the Empire rather than building up the strength of democracy at home while also focusing on rewarding the individual within the system.

**In what ways was the democracy of 4th century Athens better than that of the 5th century?**

It is particularly interesting that despite the fact Aristotle attributes the 11th stage of democracy in Athens to the 4th century, this view has not carried through into modernship. Indeed Rhodes, who although rejects the view of a ‘decline’ in the democracy of Athens, actually agrees with it to a large extent. In his mind, Rhodes establishes categorically what he feels made 5th century Athens a more democratic system and therefore essentially a better one. I will challenge his ideas individually and reject the conception that ‘democratic’ in the broadest sense of the term: δεμος -κρατια, people-power, necessarily equates to a better system and identify what developments worked well in the 4th century.

Rhodes firstly identifies three areas where he sees this ‘decline’ and worsening in the Athenian political system: the rise of technocrats, a maturity of political theory against the democracy, and finally apathy towards the system at large, since, according to Rhodes, ‘Athenian 4th century democracy had nothing to its name.’

With regards to the rise of technocrats, Plutarch records that Lykourgos and to some extent Euboulos received per annum 1,200 talents in their role as fiscal technocrats. Lykourgos himself held that position for 14 years, and he was not impeached during that tenure. This, according to Rhodes, is a severe step towards aristocratic legislature (the position did not exist in the 5th century) and a decline within the system itself. However this is a view which I do not accept. Lykourgos ringfenced finances, admittedly ring-fencing fiscal decisions from the assembly in the then theoric fund. Yet the funds, despite having a technocrat arrange it, were still decentralized to deme level according to set local budgets. Demosthenes records how he himself was impeached at his own deme-level of citizenship. The details of the procedure, which occurred in the assembly theatre illustrate a vibrant civic life, locally, yet funded by central reserves. Indeed a retaining wall was built at [illegible] during this period at the local theatre, the archaeology here supporting the view that the building was also viewed as a theatre. The notion that Lykourgos was an fiscal megalomaniac is unfounded; revenues power to the demes from the central authority. Furthermore the amount of revenue Lykourgos actually generated is significantly larger than the revenues accumulated by even the 5th century ἀρχη – clearly Lykourgos was well-fitted to his role. I would argue that the existence of technocrats such as Lykourgos was actually beneficial to the democracy here – and ensured continuous democratic participation at the deme level.

Rhodes however, also cites Plato, Aristotle and Xenephon as some of the more prolific opponents of democracy. Their works, he argues, are representative of increasing apathy towards a declining democracy – which Athens, unsuccessfully, attempted to resolve by for instance the institution of pay to the assembly. Yet this approach is flawed from the outset. Aristotle, Plato and Xenephon are aristocrats coming from a philosophical background – their views are about as representative as Bakunin or Kropotkin’s 18th century world plans of anarchism! Indeed Rhodes even seems to be unaware of a passage from Demosthenes, where the latter claims what makes Athens great is the very fact that you can criticise the political constitution without impediment. Furthermore I would see the introduction of pay to the assembly, even if it was an act designed at countering apathy, surely an improvement on the previous century (where there was in fact none). One of the consistent problems with Athenian history is analysing to what extent the farmer, the common man, or πολλος, could participate in Athenian politics at the center of Athens. Surely the pay would have helped to subsidise the rural influx, allowing greater plurality of views, which could have only made the system fairer and therefore superior to my mind.

I would also challenge this so-called ‘apathy’ towards the democracy, and argue that the new – honours based system, provided incentive for participation across the political system. In the first place the claim itself is not accurate; the building of the Dema Wall in 374 under the oversight of Chabrias, which the majority of Athenians participated in building and which was completed in a short space of time, evidently shows that there was something worth fighting for. After Conon was voted a statue to be set up in the agora after his victory at Cnidus in 394 – a place previously reserved for the tyrannicides, the practice of public honour becomes more prevalent. Rhodes sees this an aristocratic tendency – that as it may be, the system clearly worked and benefited the democracy. Eudemos is awarded a civic crown in the 330s for the lending of money but also his contribution of 1000 oxen for the building of a permanent Panatheniac stadium. Indeed the Panathenaic festival, despite being instituted by a tyrant, essentially later became synonymous with the democracy itself. By allowing their honour systems to flourish, the Athenians encouraged investment when at the early part of the 4th century they were strapped for cash, and they encouraged euergetism as well; even if it did result in the humorous wrangling of politicians (such as Demosthenes’ *Against Ctesiphon*, 334, where the latter is charged with voting improper honour to Demosthenes himself).

It is clear then that the 4th century democracy improved on many precedents (or lack of) in the previous century. Technocrats helped to stabilize the economy and ensure deme participation through the allocation of budgets. The introduction of assembly pay encouraged wider participation, and I reject the view that it can only be understood against a background of apathy. The developing honours system, whilst proving controversial in some respects – a certain Leptines is even recorded trying to rescind honours against Black Sea tyrants, I nevertheless see as an inevitable step in generation consistent revenue. There are to me clear improvements, which helped to stabilise the political system at Athens.