

Writing in a Clear and Precise Manner

Here is a (slightly altered) quote from a book called *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction* by Michael Pakaluk:

Aristotle attempts to give an account of the nature of friendship in sections 9.4 through 9.8. It is here that Aristotle develops his remarkable idea that a friend is an “other self,” because good people, he claims, are related to friends as they are to themselves. This notion of “other self,” for Aristotle, constitutes the fundamental ideal of friendship: insofar as one counts as a friend, in any way or in any respect, one plays the role of an “other self.” This notion of a friend as an “other self” leads Aristotle to examine self-love. If friends love their friends in the way that they love themselves, and friendship is something good, then it would apparently follow that self-love is something good as well. This implication seems to be at odds with the common idea that self-love is bad because it involves selfishness, and therefore in section 9.8 Aristotle gives an extended argument that there is a good sort of self-love as well as a bad. (259).

Some nice things about this passage:

- The word choice and sentence structure makes the writing clear; Pakaluk doesn't use fancy language or complex syntax unnecessarily, nor does he keep changing which word he uses to designate a particular concept.
- Pakaluk makes sure to fully explain ideas that would otherwise be unclear. For example, he explains what Aristotle means in saying that a friend is an “other self.”
- It's precisely written; Pakaluk says exactly what he means, rather than saying something close to, but not quite, what he means.

Some examples to practice with; try to rewrite these so they are clear and precise (this may involve some guesswork):

1. “In this paper, I will show that homosexuality should not be discriminated against based on choice or natural occurrence.”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. “The difficulty he finds is in relating these two statements, as he sees them to be not only connected, but the second one being inferred from the first.”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. “Nesbitt explains that if we follow that since the plans were the same, then the reprehension is the same, and this is not accurate.”