I doubt that many philosophers have worked through and correctly grasped the complicated definitions and proofs to be found in Stephen Yablo's "Identity, Essence, and Indiscernibility". Fortunately, the points I wish to make here regarding this paper do not require a thorough understanding of these definitions and proofs. Let us begin with the often discussed problem of the statue and the lump of clay. I shall suppose, with Allan Gibbard, that a statue (henceforth called 'Goliath') has been formed from a particular lump of clay (which is named 'Lump1'). Furthermore, I shall assume that the sculptor is able to bring it about that both the statue and the lump of clay come into existence at the same time — say, at $t$ — and also that these objects will go out of existence at the same time. Goliath can be said to be made out of Lump1. But are they one and the same thing? One compelling reason for maintaining that they are not is to be found in the fact that Goliath seems to have modal properties that Lump1 does not. For example, Goliath can be destroyed by flattening it out into the shape of a pancake, but Lump1 cannot be so destroyed.

Yablo is quite willing to accept the consequences of adopting this "two-thing" position regarding the above philosophical puzzle. Once one takes the position that Goliath and Lump1 are distinct things, one seems driven to postulate an infinity of distinct entities occupying exactly the same portion of space-time. For what underlies the doctrine that Goliath and Lump1 are distinct entities is the hypothesis that Goliath has certain essential properties that Lump1 does not. If so, then surely we can distinguish another entity, exactly like Goliath except for the fact that this entity has some additional essential property, say the property of coming into existence at $t$ or perhaps of being observed at a certain place.
But why suppose that there is an object exactly like Goliath except for the fact that this object has, essentially, the property of having come into existence at \( t \)? Yablo feels that it would be "indefensibly parochial" to allow the existence of the statue Goliath, but not the object with the essential property described above. We recognize the existence of statues; we do not recognize the existence of things that have the essential property of having come into existence at \( t \). But we can imagine people who did recognize such strange things. Thus, Yablo writes:

To insist on the credentials of the things we recognize against those which others do, or might, seems indefensibly parochial. In metaphysics, unusual hypothetical coloring can be no ground for exclusion. Since this is metaphysics, everything up for recognition must actually be recognized. (IEL, p. 307).

For Yablo, then, there is no choice but to recognize the existence of an object that is contingently identical to Goliath and Lump1 but that has essentially the property of having come into existence at \( t \). Of course, it then takes but a small step to conclude that there are infinitely many distinct entities that are "physically indistinguishable" from Goliath and Lump1.

To see more clearly the implications of Yablo's doctrines, let us consider what Yablo has to say about the Shroud of Turin. This object, according to Yablo, looks exactly like a piece of cloth, feels like a piece of cloth, apparently has all the usual properties that a piece of cloth can be observed to possess by scientific examination; but it is not, in some sense, a piece of cloth at all. For this object has the essential property of having enshrouded Christ.\(^3\) There is something else that is a piece of cloth and that occupies exactly the same region of space as does the Shroud of Turin, but this object, which Yablo calls 'the Cloth of Turin', is not identical to the Shroud of Turin. These two objects are said to be "contingently identical".\(^4\) They are not identical objects because, although they both enshrouded Christ, only the former has the property of having enshrouded Christ essentially: the latter has this property accidentally. This shows, Yablo thinks, that the Shroud of Turin is not identical to the particular piece of cloth that is identical to the Cloth of Turin. But by this reasoning, one can conclude that the Shroud of Turin is not identical to any piece of cloth. For any piece of cloth could