1. Kripke’s Modal Argument

Kripke’s Modal Argument (MA) leads to epiphenomenalism. Basically, the MA argues that mental states, such as pain, can never be identified with physical states. That is, they are not only non-physical states but they are never identifiable with physical correlates, not even contingently. This leads to epiphenomenalism because when we try to explain physical realities, such as behaviours and actions (say scratching) we can find no physical correlates of the mental state in question (here feeling itchy) that would connect or associate the mental state in question to the physical response where the presence of the mental state fundamentally matters i.e., where it may not as well be absent, even if present. It, also, leads to the inability to say what something like pain is, because the question “What is pain?” finds no answer in contrast to, say, the question “What is heat?” which we answer by saying “heat is the motion of molecules”.

2. Underlying Structure of the MA and Further Applications.

The arguments behind Kripke’s modal considerations as applied to the problem of mind can be generalised and applied to other things such that we find ourselves with things, like the mental states discussed above, which are wholly and completely disassociated from the physical world and world in general. Such things can neither appear in fundamental explanations nor be defined in non-tautological terms. Yet, such things may be considered absolutely essential by us.¹ These things can be called “foundationally inscrutable”² (not “epiphenomenal” because it is not necessary that those things amount to mental states and to call them “epiphenomenal” might, thus, confuse matters).

3. Definition of Foundational Inscrutability

This is an attempt at a definition of what is foundationally inscrutable built upon the arguments that Kripke uses to disassociate the mental from the physical:

Something $x$ is foundationally inscrutable when a term designating $x$ is not identifiable with a term designating a non-$x$ on the basis that the first term designates rigidly and the second term designates rigidly, but $x$ is not co-occurent with the non-$x$ in all possible worlds, and this is true of every term that does not designate $x$.

A consequence of being foundationally inscrutable is that a term designating such an object will not be able to enter into identity relations with other designating terms, not even contingent identity relations. There is no explanatory power, here, since the

¹ I think such things are not abstract either e.g., if sensations are as described they are both essential and non-abstract.
² Perhaps, it may be better to say “metaphysically inscrutable”, or “metaphysically inscrutable” or something like this.
terms cannot be identified, not even in a contingent fashion, which blocks reduction of what one term designates to another, and questions about what a foundationally inscrutable thing is cannot be informatively answered (that is in a way that does not involve a tautology).

4. Satori is Foundationally Inscrutable.

Now Satori (enlightenment) can be understood as something foundationally inscrutable either in terms of Kripke’s MA, as a mental state, or as the realization of Buddha nature, which is not reliant on thinking of it as a mental state. If we take the first choice, we have to show Satori is a sensation. I think there is some textual evidence to show this. But we needn’t take this view. We can argue that Satori as the realisation of Buddha nature is foundationally inscrutable without thinking of it as a mental state at all. This is because there is a large amount of textual evidence drawn from the writings of the prominent Kyoto philosophers and Japanese Buddhist writers on Zen that disassociates Satori as the realization of the Buddha nature from any thing else. It is my contention merely to supply from the text such materials as show that Satori is foundationally inscrutable. (That is, to show that “Satori” is a designator that is not identifiable with any other designating terms). If this can be done, then we will have shown that Satori as it is referred to in Zen writings can be understood as something that is foundationally inscrutable (noting that that notion is defined in Kripkian terms, and without it necessarily being understood as a mental state).

5. Relevance of Satori and Mind.

At this stage we can contrast Satori with worldliness, just as we might contrast the mental with the physical. Understanding practical relevance in worldly and physical terms we find Satori lacking the quality to explain or contribute to the realm of worldliness (even if it is the realization of the one true reality), just as we find the mental is unable to explain or contribute to the physical realm (which is just a restatement of epiphenomenalism), since in both cases there is nothing present which may as well not have been absent in understanding a worldly or physical moment, even if the foundationally inscrutable thing in question is actually present. This is interesting because it does not contradict the conclusions of those who have actually achieved the Satori state but rather is just what they seem to be saying, and, again, there is a load of textual evidence for this. In a slogan: nothing changes when everything changes. This conclusion has a positive and consistent relation to Zen Buddhism.