

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

DOES “MEANING” HAVE MEANING?

Source: ChatGPT

Yes — and that question opens a surprisingly deep door.

The simple answer

“Meaning” means:



what something signifies, expresses, or intends to communicate.

So, in a dictionary sense, the word *meaning* refers to the significance, sense, or interpretation of something.

The deeper answer

When you ask, “*Does ‘meaning’ have a meaning?*” you’re stepping into philosophy and language theory.

1. Self-reference

The word’s *meaning* is an example of language that points back to itself. It’s like asking:

- What does “definition” mean?
- What does “word” mean?

Language can describe itself — that’s part of how humans think abstractly.

2. Where meaning comes from

Different traditions answer differently:

- **Dictionary / linguistic view:**
Meaning comes from agreed usage in a language community.
- **Philosophical view (often influenced by Wittgenstein):**
Meaning comes from **how a word is used** in life and context.
- **Existential/human view:**
Meaning is something humans **create**, not something that exists on its own.

The paradox hiding in your question

To explain *meaning*, we must use words... which themselves rely on meaning.
So meaning is partly **self-supporting** — a network rather than a single fixed foundation.

In a way, your question is similar to asking:

Is meaning something we discover, or something we make?

If you feel like exploring further, we could look at this linguistically, philosophically, or even psychologically — each gives a very different answer.

Les Bush