How We Decide

Consider decision-making as an industrial plant — an idea factory, if you will — where **inputs** go thru a **process** to get turned into **outputs**, thus:

Inputs —> Process —> Outputs

Outputs. The results of decision-making are things we do, say, think, and believe. Outputs also include several things which occur below (or perhaps outside of) the level of conscious thought: emotions, esthetics, and habits; since these don't involve conscious thot, we'll skip them.

Inputs. There are several types of inputs into decisions, each with its own problems: definitions, axioms, ordinary assumptions, genetics, sensations, memories, and testimony.

Processes. Listed in order from highest to lowest level of reliability:

(1) *Logic*. At core, a syllogism has 2 explicitly stated premises ("if" statements) which are combined using rules of logic to produce a conclusion (a "then" statement). Everything else is built on this. Logic tells us absolutely nothing about the truth of the premises, but as processes go it's absolutely cracker-jack — the most robust and reliable of them all.

(2) *Reason*. This is the standard used in law: "Under the circumstances, what would a reasonable person do?". It's similar to logic but is heavily larded with considerations of the practical.

(3) *Confidence*. You are confident of something on the basis of its track record or the history of similar situations, without taking the time to examine the particulars of the current situation.

(4) *Trust*. This is similar to confidence, except that the way the language has evolved, we usually express confidence in things and trust in people. Little children usually given parents a free ride when it comes to trust, because they're in no position to know any better. Adults tend to trust authority figures more than is warranted. Etc. Thus it's less reliable than confidence.

(5) *Chance*. You usually don't resort to chance unless you've reduced your alternatives down to 2 or 3 options, none of which is clearly better than any of the others. Your time might well be more efficiently spent making some sort of decision than in further dithering.

(6) *Obedience*. This is like a corrupted form of trust. You do what someone else tells you to, but for reasons of pressure, coercion, immaturity, feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, threat, etc., rather than a free-will decision.

(7) *Hope*. The evidence points toward a conclusion that we really don't want, so we base our decisions — for no particularly good reason — on the hope that what we do want will come true.

(8) *Faith*. Last and least is faith, the decision-making tool of last resort (and thus the one most favored by the priesthood). Faith is when you want to believe something but there's not a shred of evidence for it and quite often lots of evidence against it. Whenever you have evidence to support a conclusion, you'd use one of the 7 previous decision-making methods and would have no hesitation in saying so. Faith gets hauled out only to support conclusions for which there is no reason to believe in their truth, validity, efficacy, or efficiency.