

## 26.

### Errors in the dominant theory

In 1842, when Abraham Lincoln (1809 ~ 1865) was addressing the temperance folks in Springfield, Illinois, he famously said that "none seemed to think the injury arose from the use of a bad thing, but from the abuse of a very good thing"(169). The belief that we are dealing with the use of a bad thing continues to dominate the policy. The dominant dogma claims that it is necessary to reduce the population total alcohol consumption by increasing the price and reducing the availability of the beverages in order to diminish the alcohol-related harms. This is called the total consumption model (170). The claims were originally presented in a pivotal book entitled *Alcohol Control Policies in Public Health Perspective* (159). The authors of this book, being aware of the weaknesses of their argumentation, made their conclusions with great reservations. If they had known then what is known now, perhaps they would have written otherwise. Nevertheless, the theory is nowadays thought to be as watertight as concrete. In 1994, a book entitled *Alcohol Policy and the Public Good* (103) stated that "The research established beyond doubt that public

health measures of proven effectiveness are available to serve the public good by reducing the widespread costs and pain related to alcohol use. To that end, it is appropriate to deploy responses that influence both the total amount of alcohol consumed by a population and the high risk contexts and drinking behaviors that are so often associated with alcohol-related problems.”. But concrete is not watertight in the long run.