

**SIGNIFICANT DATE: Nov. 18, 1930 — Soka Gakkai Founding Day
Creating Value Right Now**

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Nov. 18, 1930, was the day the term *Soka Kyoiku Gakkai* (Value-Creating Educational Society) was first used in reference to the body of lay practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. It was also the day, in 1944, that Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Soka Gakkai founder, died in jail, unjustly imprisoned by the Japanese Imperial regime.

To me, this is a day of great celebration and appreciation: Without Mr. Makiguchi's supreme determination to maintain the purity of this religion and his heartfelt dedication to propagate it — even at the cost of his life — I would not have heard of it nor be able to embrace it today.

When I first heard of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, in February 1974, I was a young man of 17 with a dark outlook on life. I had read the works of a number of great philosophers and writers and was especially drawn to Hermann Hesse (1877–1962).

Much of Hesse's work deals with themes I strongly related to: the struggles of youth to find self-expression and identity, concern for the future, and bitter distaste for the state of the world and religious politics. Hesse was born in Germany, but he moved to Switzerland during World War I because of his absolute abhorrence of war. Some of his anti-war essays were considered by the Germans too volatile to publish during the two world wars and were not released until after his death, in the collection *If The War Goes On...*

He wrote: "The Great War...for years so devastated the world. Today we stand among its ruins, still deafened by its noise, embittered by its absurdity, and sickened by the streams of blood that haunt all our dreams." This, I believe, sums up the aftermath of *every* war and reflects the spirit yearning for humanity evident in all of Hesse's later works. His writings sought solutions to social conflicts that did not resort to military might. He eventually won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946.

I first encountered this author when I was 15 and given a copy of *Siddhartha*, Hesse's account of Shakyamuni's youth. The friend who gave it to me two years later introduced me to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I believe this book was the external cause that led me to look to Eastern philosophy for answers to the basic questions of life and death that were not addressed in my upbringing as the son of a Baptist minister. I will always appreciate Hesse's work for that.

Hesse was of the same era as Makiguchi, born to a world torn by the barbarity of war. I sincerely believe that Hesse, like Makiguchi, was searching for a way to create value.

And that's what the meaning of Nov. 18 comes down to: How can I, in this moment, in this situation, create positive, lasting value for myself and everyone else involved? Makiguchi expressed his answers to that question in *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*.

Sure, I have days when I concentrate more on the goals I have not yet reached, those things I have not yet accomplished, than on my gratitude for just being able to create value with this Buddhism. But on Nov. 18 this year, all day, I am determined to keep in mind those who have inspired me toward value creation, like Hesse and Makiguchi, and the spirit of appreciation that goes hand in hand with value creation.

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