

## A Final Conversation with a Great Philosopher

I hadn't been able to get through to the London number for several days. When the mail service did pick up, John Michell's mailbox was completely full. Then, finally on a Tuesday, the now-familiar voice with its distinct British accent answered, "Hello?"

I always get a slightly nervous feeling when I'm about to talk to an author, but I overcome it with thinking, "stick to the facts, the relevant questions!" In this case my nervousness dissipated instantly, because John Michell, the esteemed author of the 1969 bestseller *The View Over Atlantis* as well as 25 other titles that fueled the counterculture and new age movement, was so warm and welcoming; he immediately put me at ease. Plus, we had questions about his book to resolve! That day we were working on *The Sacred Center*, about the art of finding sacred sanctuaries.

We decided to delete a sentence that had become obsolete since the first edition. It's always great to realize that sometimes the best fix is to just not say anything at all. After working through the last few questions I had for him, our conversation somehow turned philosophical. As many people know, John Michell wrote extensively about the metaphysical and spiritual qualities of the universe, discussing at length the sacred numbers and geometry found in nature and in spiritual mysteries—Fibonacci spirals and the golden angle, the divine city of the New Jerusalem.

I mentioned how sad it is that some people choose to ignore the spiritual aspect of the world around them. “It’s a bit limited, isn’t it?” said John. “Yes, yes it is,” I said, and we laughed.

As the conversation drew to a close, I mentioned his mailbox having been full and having tried to reach him. That’s when John told me he’d been at the hospital, where the doctors had found a spot on his lung. My breath caught in my throat—“oh.” Despite the ominous potential of such news, John was upbeat and charming as ever, and our conversation ended with laughter and goodwill.

Not long after I learned that John Michell had died, his health having deteriorated stunningly quickly. My heart sank at the news. How could it be that I had the privilege of working with this great thinker and philosopher, esteemed by so many intellectuals, scholars, and cultural icons, on one of his last projects? I am humbled by it, this gift my own life journey gave me unexpectedly.

On April 24, 2009 a great light went out of the world, but I am certain that John Michell is now with the “divine geomancer” he was so fond of writing about.