



As a teenager, Armin-Christoph Heining came out as a gay but only towards very close people. Nevertheless, at the age of twenty, he became a Benedictine monk, out of his religious longing. He studied theology and became a deacon. However, his strong sexuality did not fade in the prayers, which according to Catholic faith, should have been the case. Armin continued his search for a solution of how to combine spirituality and sexuality. He left the monastic life at 30 and was trained by Margo Naslednikov to become a SkyDancer. He left this community too and in 1992, he founded his own project, to spread Tantra in the world of the Gay.

By Armin Heining

At the age of 14, I could already perceive that I felt more attracted to men. I grew up in a catholic bourgeois family, on the edge of a small town very close to the Bavarian forest. At that time, same-sex sexuality was largely considered taboo. For better or worse, I struggled myself through one of the local secondary schools. The atmosphere of the catholic church, me as an altar server, actor in a theater or group lead raised my spirit considerably in my spare time. However, I had to deal with a permanent emotional pain inside of me, which I experienced as some sort of burn-out syndrome without knowing the exact cause. I found consolation and new energy in the liturgy as well as in the church services. I took my time for personal devotions and to read the Bible. My wish was to become part of a community, especially in my prayers. Back then, a dream came up again and again in which I said to myself: » I will either become a Saint or I will end up in the gutter«. Of course, I perceived quite clearly my religious and sexual longings at that time; for me it seemed to be impossible to somehow bring these two things together, especially with the homosexual orientation. For me, sexuality was bad and homosexuality even twice as bad. So, I was in search of myself: Who am I actually?

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Loneliness

I started to trust our local priest. I regularly saw him for personal talks. I told him about my homosexual orientation. He listened, without commenting, which certainly can be regarded as an advanced behavior at that time. I explained him my sexual drive. He did not judge on it. I also told him about my loneliness, particularly in my prayers. I asked him explicitly where I could find communities for my prayers, more intense ones than the church communities. »In monasteries«, was his answer. »There are more strict and basic ones but also others that are a bit more active and turned towards today's world«, he said. »Something in between would be interesting for me«, was my answer. This is how the Benedictine Order came up. »And where is the next Benedictine Monastery?« I went there in 1976 at the beginning of the year. I could give it a try for five days – an experience that overwhelmed me. In particular the Gregorian chants of the Psalms touched me so deeply that already in my dreams, I came to see myself as a monk, who I became four years later. In the whole period before my final secondary school examinations, I had visited several monasteries and communities, but I decided to follow my »first love«, which was the monastery where I had spent those five days.

The decision to join a monastery

I joined the monastery in mid August 1980. The novitiate went smoothly. I felt comfortable in the community with many brothers of my age. The rhythm of »Pray and Work« gave my life a certain structure and security. It was a natural step to commit myself to the monastery and to the community for three more years, that was in 1981. Choral prayers, eucharist, prayer ceremonies, adorations etcetera could not satisfy me over the years: I was searching for deeper fulfillment and for a way to heal my emotional pain. So, in 1983, I started to turn to Christian contemplation. During my theology studies from 1981 to 1986, a meditation house opened just next door to the place where I did my foundation year. I thankfully accepted their offers after my daily silent meditation. I almost spent more time in the meditation house than at the university, which shows how strong my longing for God was, my longing to re-connect to the primal ground.

My sexual fire was ablaze then, most probably also because of the meditation. A sexual affair with one of the brothers of – thank god – another abbey, upset me to the marrow: On the one side there was the strictly prohibited homosexual lust, on the other side the love to God and my path as a monk. In addition, at that time my solemn vows were to come in my home monastery. How should I explain to the abbot and to the brothers that now – after my period of four years – I needed some more time to think about it all, whereas from the outside, everything was fine with me? A devoted, young monk who is appreciated and liked by the others in his monastery.

In 1984, I decided to make profession of my religious vows. That was a celebration of complete devotion to my life including my sexuality: »Suscipe me Domine, secundum eloquium tuum et vivam. Et ne confundas me ab expectatione mea.« – »Receive me Lord, as you have promised, and I shall live; do not disappoint me in my hope «

I was given an existential experience of presence and closeness of God. Joy, light, inner warmth and fulfillment were still in me several weeks afterwards.

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Whether you do therapy with the people or you forgive
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The path to catharsis

However, my sexual desires did not find any healing with the solemn profession and the new life. In the seminar »Contemplation and dream work«, one week after the new life conditions, I became aware of my raw sexual power as a huge shadow of my personality. A path of emotional purification and change began: I lived sexually abstinent and learned to let spread my sexual power through the whole body in the form of heat. This provoked some resistance in me and at the beginning, many tears flew and I even had nightmares. My »ego« did not want to let go the sexual desires. On the outside, I came into big conflicts with the abbot and my brothers. They asked: »Why do you want to participate in seminars? We have everything here: Choral prayers! Liturgy!« Or: »Why do you see a therapist outside of the monastery? We have the spiritual support here and confession, too!« These differences finally lead to the point in 1986 when I was not admitted to the Ordination of Priests, after I had successfully completed my theology studies: » We don't know what you are doing in the confessional: Whether you do therapy with the people or you forgive them all their sins.« I did not manage to make them clear the difference between therapy and ecclesiastical absolution. My life was at a dead end.

I was declined the Ordination of Priests two more times. In those two years, I lived in a community but with a lack of confidence in me, I lived with almost no work and hardly any tasks. In 1988, I took all my courage and said to my superior: »My abbot, I think, in this case it is not about my ordination. In my opinion, there is another question behind: Do we belong together or not.« And my abbot replied »Yes«. And suddenly there was a certain agreement back, after about four years of misunderstandings and conflicts. I became so aware of my religious identity that I did not avoid open confrontations with the religious representatives anymore.

The path to clarification

The abbot and the community finally admitted me for the Ordination of Priests – after all, they did not want to abandon me. We agreed on a trial period of two years, regarding our sense of togetherness. I asked if I could visit and use seminars and therapies as long as they made sense and as long as I considered them as necessary and the right thing to do. A neighbor abbey gave me the opportunity to work as an educator in their residential school. I was given time and space to take out the best of me.

Confidence and inner stability were developed.

At the end of the two-year trial period, I recognized that my longing for God found its answer in the deepness. I could feel the inner peace in me. I had learned to transform my sexual power. I took it with me in the choral prayers and in liturgy. As an educator in the residential school, I let my power flow to concentrate more on caring for my students and on being friendly with my colleagues and employees. Nevertheless, during this time, it seemed impossible to completely open myself again to the abbot and my brothers.

In February 1990, the Abbey and me, we sent out my demand to quit the monastery and to dispense the ordination in Rome. I left on 1 August 1990. I already received the respective documents from Rome in October. A new stage of life had just begun. In the end, I was sure about what religious practicing, immersion and meditation could give me and where it simply could not help me.

The path to tantric sexuality

Now, I was interested in the vivid and open examination of eroticism and sexuality. Yet in autumn 1990, I learned about »SkyDancing-Tantra« from Margot Anand Naslednikov. Again, my heart was touched. In the one-year »Training for Ecstasy and Love«, I could find exactly what I had learned and developed during my years in the monastery, on the way to contemplation: the quality of devotion. But now, I did not do it alone with myself, to a power in me but by sharing this power with a partner and to respond to each other. And that happened again with vocal tones, tantric religious services and rituals. With the intense sensations of meditation, sitting in silence, together in the love position of

»Yabyum« and the »Wave of Bliss«, the spiritual way became more concrete by sharing this experience with another person.

Back then, in 1991, when I finished the »Training for Ecstasy & Love«, tantric life and sharing among homosexual lovers was not very common. I decided to start teaching Tantra. I wrote to Margot Anand and asked her if she would support me to spread SkyDancing Tantra into the world of homosexual men. She immediately invited me to her teacher training, which she held in Switzerland at that time.

»The fear of being gay is deep in the cells of so many men. They lose this fear only when they give themselves over to the flow of events.«

My own project

In September 1992, I founded my own project: »Gay-Tantra« and the »Institute for Meditation & Tantra«. I started to transfer the knowledge gained from the Tantra training into the men-loving world, which was, by the way, not that easy at that time: My meditation teachers thought that I was only looking for a good blow to my ego: »You want to become something special, right?«. In the beginning, I was considerably less successful with my project than all my heterosexual colleagues – whatever happened, I stayed loyal to my project, which was to combine meditation with ecstatic sexuality, in the frame of same-sex loving men. This environment attracted and excited me. My first seminar program was »The art of erotic self-love«. This seminar would take several days. During those days, I did not orientate myself anymore on the heterosexual basis regarding contents and the course of actions. I developed it from my own intuition and from my homosexual identity.

Even back then, married men came to my individual massage sessions. Most of them blocked themselves, because of the fear that was in them to maybe discover homosexual tendencies and pleasure: their bodies did show orgasmic reactions, but they held their hands so tight to the body to absolutely avoid any contact with the other male in the room. The fear of being gay is deep in the cells of so many men. In my opinion, this is completely unnecessary: Sexual identity and sexual orientation is something natural, something fluent. When I am in flux instead of stuck in my thinking and in my head, I lose all my fears and restrictions.

To take leave of the SkyDancers

It was only in 2007/2008 that I discovered the so-called »Tantra massages«, which in my opinion can be categorized into »Erotic Wellness« and therefore, they are in a certain contradiction to the traditional and also to the neospiritual Tantra which can be seen as a path for personal development and maturity. However, it was quite clear to me that: If I want to become widely accepted and successful with my project in the gay society, I would need to orientate myself towards the erotic wellness sector. The demand for this sector is increasing whereas only a few men are interested in Tantra as a path for personal development. Those who go to massages usually discover this aspect little by little, when they want to know why »Tantra massages« are called like this and start to ask questions about it.

So, I asked my teacher and mentor Margot Anand to quit the SkyDancing-Tantra community. »Armin, but you don't have to go. We love you. And you have your place here with us – no problem!«. Nevertheless, I could feel that deep inside herself, Margot did not agree with this way of softening Tantra in the Western World. Despite all, I opened myself for this development and I did it with the inner freedom to register a business as a sex worker, if necessary, in case there was no other option: If they are in the mood for it, gay massage guests get into intimate contact more easily with the

masseur, much more than it is allowed and practiced in »serious« heterosexual Tantra studios. Me, as a naked masseur, I cannot hide my lust as women can. Should I hide or hold my lust back, only to stick to a law? These were my inner questions and reasons why I asked to quit the SkyDancing community. With the final ritual of discharge in June 2008, the tears came running down my cheeks and I realized that: At the end, I left a (heterosexual) community in which I had my place, although there were no external circumstances that would have justified it.

Tantra Massages for gay men

After I had lived 48 years of my life in Bavaria, I moved from Nuremberg to Berlin where I opened the Gay Tantra Oasis in January 2009. This was the first studio that offered Tantra massages for (gay) men. This was a year of significant economic recession. According to the news, this was the worst time to found a new company. But I followed my inner voice and I was happy that my Tantra massages found recognition. And I am surprised to see how rare it is to find direct sexuality with the massage guests, although I receive them very openly and relaxed.

I have to say that my lust decreases rapidly when I feel the focus of my counterpart during a massage, instead of remaining in erotic excitement, which is what I definitely prefer. About sixty per cent of our guests in the oasis are heterosexual or bisexual men that are already taken. All of them want to live and enjoy their homoerotic side, without giving up their relationship and/or family. Only about ten per cent are identified as gay. Between those two target groups, there is a third one which is completely age-independent, starting from the 18 year-old to the 75 year-old: the insecure and searching man. Those guests are looking for a way to extend their sexuality. For them, the massage is a secure option to try something new, for example anal contact and massage. They do not know that well how to deal with their sexual identity. A spiritual connection can lead them out of this dilemma, starting in the head and going back to the natural flow.

The Saint ended up in the gutter ...

In 2009, I began to contribute in this field as an author and director in counselor films, where I met the 28 year-old gay porno actor. I prepared them in my 10-days crash course for the movie shooting. Suddenly I realized that now, I definitely had ended up in the middle of the gutter, exactly there, where I was so afraid of to end up in when I was a 14 year-old boy. But now I was working together with young actors and a lot of fine feeling, driven by high creativity and enthusiasm that I truly could never have dreamed of as an adolescent.

And now, in the year 2012, I go straight into my 20th project anniversary of bringing Tantra out into the world of homosexual men. And I reckon that I will remain in great demand as a spiritual teacher and mentor: The gay world is taking over more and more norms and values from the heterosexual environment, also in sexual behavior. And there will always be the mission of integrating sexuality & spirituality, of healing and liberation; which is indeed for more and more people a desirable objective in life. The categorizations into morally good, morally objectionable, sexual or spiritual lose more and more importance at that point. The experience of the Here&Now takes its place with all its limits and freedom.



Armin-Christoph Heining, born in the 60s, is diploma theologian, educator and alternative practitioner. He sees himself as a monk and a wanderer on spiritual paths, as somebody who teaches and who learns at the same time. After his time in the Benedictine Monastery, he became a teacher for »Sky-Dancing«-Tantra and since 1992, he mainly teaches »Gay SkyDancing« nationally and abroad. You can find more information on www.gay-tantra.eu