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“Theōría-theōrēma-theōreîn: on the vocabulary, style, and content of Ennead III. 8 [30] – On nature, contemplation and the One”

It is not only the thesis of a productive contemplation that is a strong and strange paradox: the treatise itself in which Plotinus presents such thesis (*Ennead* III. 8 [30]) is perhaps even more paradoxical than the thesis. For while this treatise is usually regarded as one of Plotinus' most characteristic works, the doctrine and the language we find in it seem to be unique in the Plotinian corpus. If the doctrine of contemplation occurs only in this treatise, this is not necessarily an issue by itself; but the fact that Plotinus seems to employ the *theōría*-vocabulary in a technical sense and in an accurate way different from any other treatise is intriguing. Thus, my aim in this paper is fourfold: i) I will argue that similar uses of the substantives *theōría* and *theōrēma*, and of the verb *theōreîn*, are extremely rare in the *Enneads*, if not entirely absent from them, ii) although the doctrine of contemplation that they express, with the exception of a few details, can be found in treatises other than III.8 [30], though formulated in different, more conventionally Plotinian, terms; iii) I will also suggest that the polished and non-polemical prose of III. 8 [30] insinuates that Plotinus intended it to reach a wide audience, iv) and that *Ennead* II. 9[33] 18 may give us a clue to the reason of Plotinus' choice of the *theōría*-vocabulary of III. 8 [30].