Based on reading from Gestalt Counselling in Action by Petruska Clarkson

Different reading have given variations on the phrasing or naming of the turn around of events or experiences that make up the phases of contact by the self with the environment.

Additionally the full context and meaning is better brought out in consideration of the creative-adjustment styles in this cycle, so read in conjunction with Cycle Disturbance

**Sensation**

At the point where the self is balanced, between cycles, after completion and prior to the next fore-contact there is either internal or external disturbances will impinge upon the self heralding the start of the figure/background formation process.

The self feels, senses, (a) disturbance, a change of status and so (a) figure forms to the fore front. The person is ready to notice, to be aware
Awareness

Gradually or suddenly we become aware of events impinging via our senses, or our feelings, or mentally onto our consciousness. As a form of experience, there is a fresh Gestalten. A need arises and the need is known - you recognise that you have a need; this is not the same as knowing what the need is.

Mobilisation

Usually follows awareness in that the person becomes aroused or emotional of the opportunities leading to satisfaction of the need. The healthy person is alive to the senses, to the surroundings, is open to information.

Action

A punctuation - or figure formation - in the process of contact. The person chooses or rejects possibilities. Behaviours are relevant to the effective fulfillment of needs in the here and now. Action occurs at the boundaries of self and environment. Occurring within dialogue and within the contact with others. The healthy self is able to take from and give to the inter action and to experience its fullness.

Contact

Having healthily mobilised and acted there will follow full and vibrant contact, termed final contact by Goodman (Perls et al, 1951 p403)

The whole (contact) is more than the sum of its parts - physical senses of touch feel, hear etc, and more than these senses might provide. It is not the seeing or hearing but how it is heard or seen; it is not the act of thinking or remembering that provides the contact but the quality of thought, seeing, remembering, hearing etc, and the summation of these.

Contact occurs at the boundary of our self and the environment. within the moment of contact all else merges to the background; as seeing your loved one in a crowd, everyone and everything else blurs and melts with your loved one in the fore-ground

The full and final contact marks the closure of a particular Gestalt.
Contact is a basic need of human beings, providing and opening to the possibility for change

**Integration and Assimilation: Satisfaction**

Perls et al (1951/1969) refer to this as post-contact. This is the after glow, the satisfaction following the full and complete experience. This is the quiet after the storm prior to separation or withdrawal. In a full and vibrant contact-cycle the individual is able to savour the completion and is ready to move on with satisfaction and readiness of the next sensation.

**Withdrawal**

Following the satisfaction experienced in the post contact phase the person is able to withdraw to the balanced fore- and back-ground stasis. Another way of viewing this is moving into the resting void; where sensation has yet, is awaiting, to be felt.

**Interrupting the Contact Cycle**

Based on reading from Gestalt Counselling in Action by Petruska Clarkson

Read after or in conjunction with The Contact Cycle The healthy action is shown is small print for reference, and is linked into the reference window.

**Desensitisation / Sensation**

The person will shut out sensations which may be impinging on the body physically or emotionally and mentally. For example ignoring the (physical) pain of cutting the body; ignoring the continuing ache of an injury. Emotionally ignoring the ache of detachment from your fellow being, the pain of isolation, of being bullied.

Such sensations may be diluted, disregarded or neglected. This may provide (short term) protection for the person but brings with it the (continuing) rejection of positive sensations.
Deflection / Awareness

To avoid becoming aware of what is perceived to be damaging or negative experiences the person will seek to turn away direct contact with another person. This avoidance ensures criticism is not heard and therefore does not upset or damage the person. However in turning this unwelcome criticism away the person will also turn away the positive

"you look nice today" "Oh I don't think so, I haven't shaved today!"

"This is a good piece of writing!" "Uh, it's just a few notes jotted down"

Rather than accept (welcome) attention, meaning bringing awareness to a situation the person deflects, or side steps from the situation, voiding being aware; avoiding contact. The effect is to avoid your surroundings, your environment; and to miss the positiveness coming to you

Introjection / Mobilisation

Rather than mobilising the body and mind to the opportunities surrounding this new awareness the person switches to how he 'should' react in the predefined manner which seems appropriate to the situation. More energy would seem to go into deciding what is the action should be than would be spent in exploring the breadth and depth of the experience.

Whilst the learning process in the younger years requires social behaviour to apply rules - should do this, should not do that the person also needs to be allowed to break out and decide which 'shoulds' need to apply, and when.

The person may lack an inner feeling of self, of direction and thus be unable to differentiate in varying situations.

Projection / Action

"It takes one to know one" ; "he reminds me of me"
The speaker is aware of his qualities and is seeing them in another. Projection would be when the speaker sees the qualities (or flaws) he possesses BUT only in another, not in himself.

Projection may be described as seeing in someone else the qualities you are not acknowledging in yourself. A trait, attitude or feeling which is seen as being directed towards you but actually has stemmed from you. For example you may see that people are difficult and reject your friendship, actually you are difficult and will not allow a friendship.

**Retroflection / Final Contact**

Retroflection may specifically interrupt the final contact phase. The person is not able to receive or assimilate with his environment and so resorts to retroflection.

This behaviour is learnt, reinforced, in development when feelings and thoughts are not validated in the family group, or when expressed feelings or thoughts are punished without validation.

There are two types of retroflection:

(i) You would do to yourself that which you want done TO the other

(ii) you do to yourself that which you want done BY the other

Note the difference - To and By.

In the first type instead of the person expressing their opinion, anger, frustration, on the other person it is turned inwards. This leads to a critical self, and the ultimate criticism of self is suicide; being the retroflective form of homicide

In the second type of retroflection the person will express or behave how they would wish to be treated. For example in the context of a difficult situation the person may stroke the back of the hand in comfort, this being what they would have wanted from their loved one.

In viewing the two types it would seem
‘TO me instead of the other’ action is hostile to the self

‘BY me instead of the other’ action is comforting the self.

**Egotism / Satisfaction**

Egotism may occur/interrupt at any time in the Healthy Cycle and does often interrupts satisfaction. This interruption may see the person being more involved with them self rather than the broader context of the contact and environment and thus miss the full impact of giving and receiving.

Think of this in terms of the person who in watching the film spends most the time saying how wonderful it is, how superb is the action, how exciting it is, and so on. . . . the need is for the individual to step out and be the spectator or commentator. In egotism the individual has something to say about everything. This spectatoring, this commentating need not be externalised; holding the conversation internally equally destroys the pleasure of the moment, the event.

This disturbance reduces the opportunity to live the experience.

However, as with much of the Healthy Cycle and its disturbances, egotism plays an important part in the maturation process of an individual. Remember, the healthy becomes unhealthy when its dominance does not wane at the appropriate moment

**Confluence / Withdrawal**

Confluence may be seen in individuals whose self becomes as much a part of their job or past time. So the computer programmer who lives to code, to socialise only through bits and bytes; the sport enthusiast whose whole happiness seems determined by whether or not there is a win on Saturday, or by how well the sporting idol performs on the field.

Confluence, merging, with another person or with a situation or the surroundings leads to loss of self, to lack of satisfaction and to the dulling of the receptiveness to sensation.
Confluence is the lack of differentiation between the self and other. In the context of the disturbance at the withdrawal stage the individual clings to the gestalt, is unable to appreciate the letting go will allow a further new enriching experience to come forward.