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Love your neighbour as yourself: The influence of arm movements in prosocial behavior

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Abstract: There are numerous findings in the literature supporting an association between bodily states and other cognitive and social processes. For example, Glenberg and Kaschak (2003) found that verbs with a movement component (e.g., give) are faster recognized when participants perform a congruent movement (extending an arm) than an incongruent one (flexing an arm). In the present experiment, we wanted to examine whether arm movements commonly associated with give (extend an arm) or take (flex an arm) could have an influence on participants' prosocial behaviour. Participants were required to distribute an amount of coins into two boxes - one box assigned themselves, the other assigned to another unknown participant - either by performing an arm extension or an arm flexion on a multi touch screen. Results show that the distribution of the coins was affected by the movement performed, and also movement times differed depending on the movement and the targeted box.