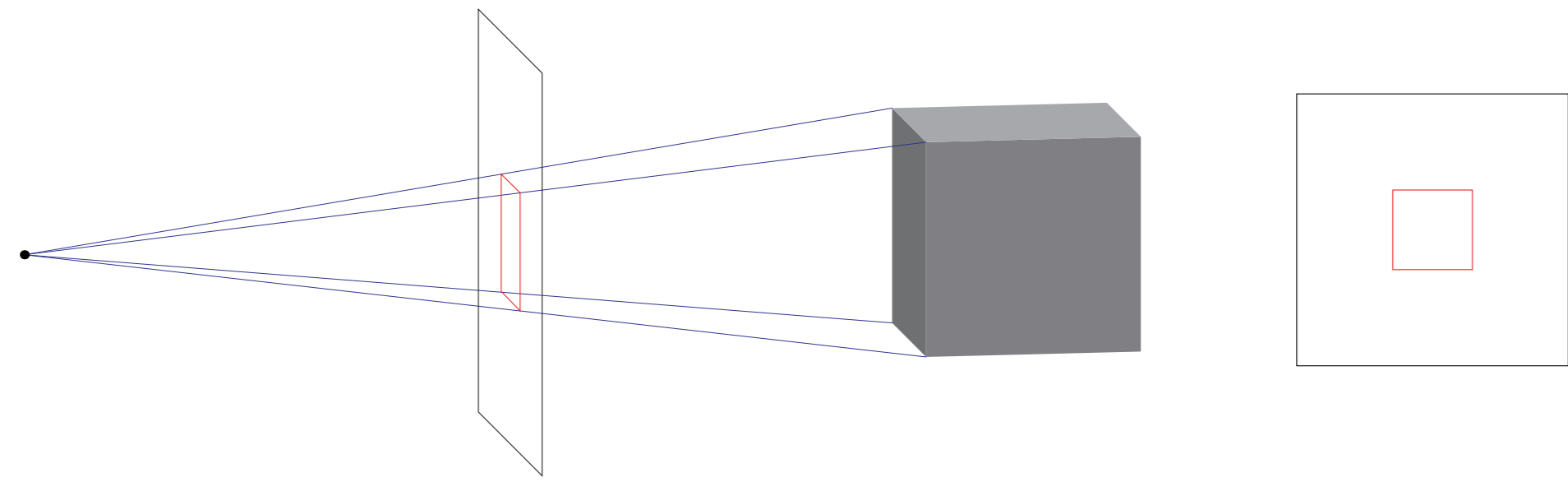


Implications for the Philosophy of Depiction



Consider projection theory...

- **Intuitive idea:**

Pictures are constructed by taking projections of scenes from viewpoints. To interpret a picture is to work backwards from the picture itself to the kind of scene it must have been projected from.

- **Simplified definition:**

P is an accurate picture of S centered at V iff P is a projection of S relative to V .

- **Objection:**

A split-style depiction of an animal does not match the projection of that animal relative to any one viewpoint.

- **Reply:**

True— but each facet of a split-style picture is the result of projecting from a different viewpoint. The split-style system of depiction is simply one that requires multiple viewpoints and projections.

- **Assessment:**

This is a reasonable way to extend the projection theory, but it does give up on some of the idea's original motivations. For example, multi-view projection here isn't really an abstraction from the behavior of light. And interpreting a picture isn't really a matter of working backwards to a unified scene.

Common principles of pictorial representation?

- **Pictorial space.** Pictures convey coherent pictorial spaces.
- **Unified viewpoint.** Pictures represent their subject from a single viewpoint.
- **Visual perception.** Pictures (abstractly) recreate visual perception.
- We have held these assumptions fixed in most of this class. Do they reflect a bias towards East/West art?
- If you were a member of an indigenous group like the Haida, would your philosophy of pictorial representation look the same as the philosophical theories we've considered?

Phil 161: Non-Western Art

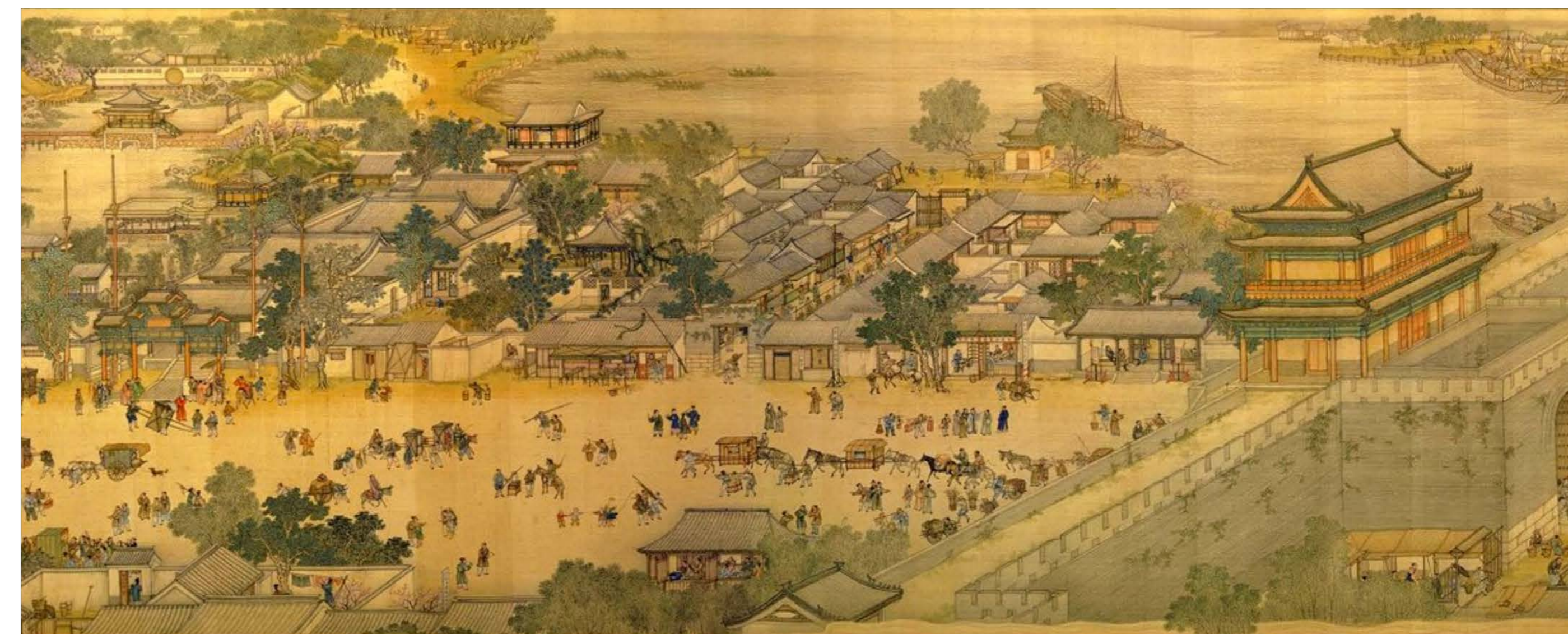
1.27.25 • Prof. G. Greenberg

WEIRD Societies and their Art

We have looked at the concept of a **system of depiction**. We've seen how systems of depiction vary in the ways they handle space, line, abstraction.

But we've primarily focused on cases that have come from WEIRD societies (**White, Educated, Industrial, Rich, and Democratic**) and large scale "civilizations" (classical East Asian art, classical Western art), and their modern descendents.

We've focused on pictures from **large scale, industrial, wealthy societies**.



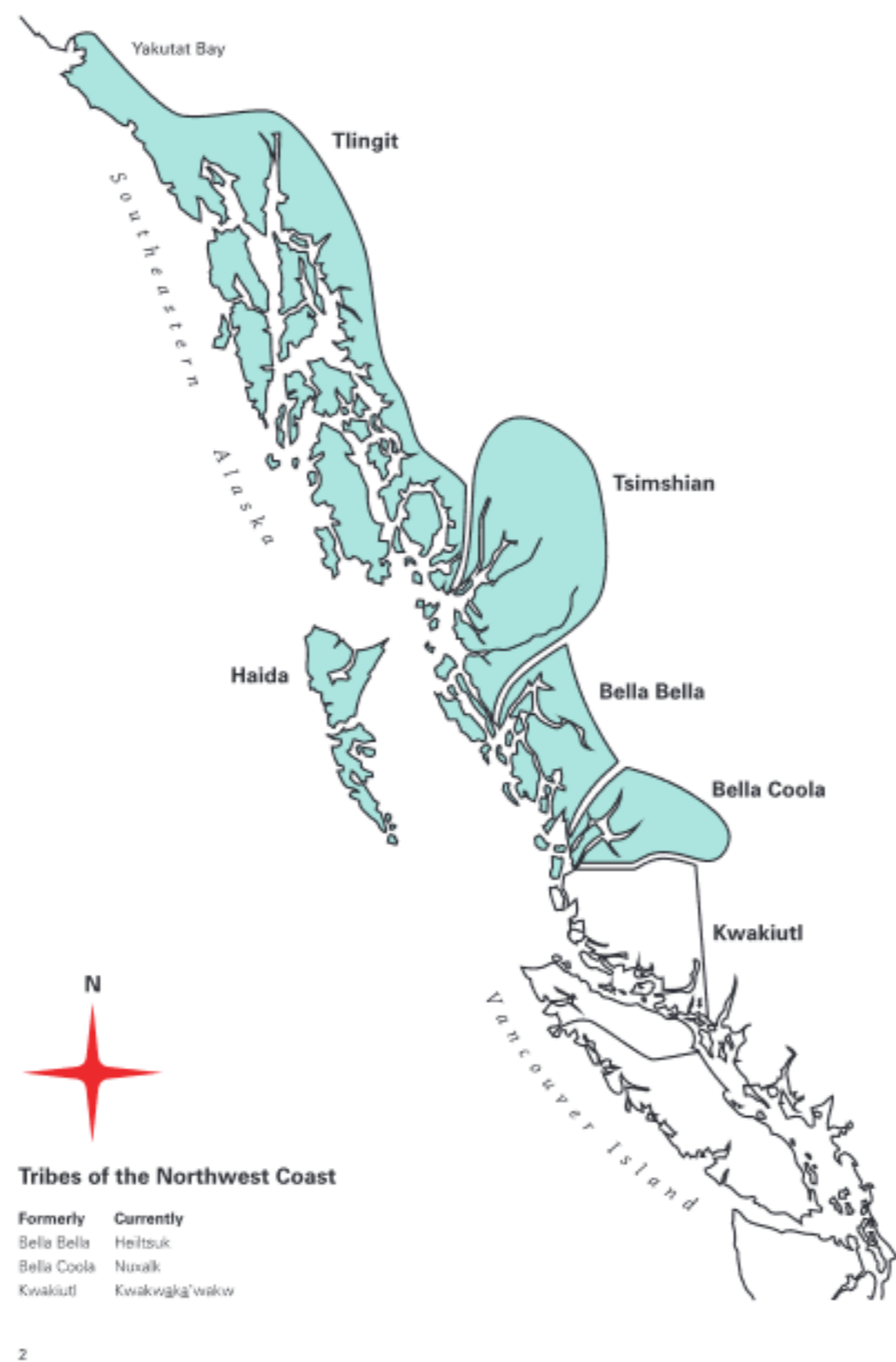
Along the River During the Qingming Festival, 12th century, by Zhang Zeduan



School of Athens, 1509, by Raphael.

Indigenous Art of the Pacific Northwest

- Pacific Northwest Coast indigenous peoples include: Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Coast Salish.
- Look at the art in its original forms (on boxes, cloth, hats).
- A prominent form is called split-style: a single picture is fractured into two picture planes, each showing one half of an object.
- Hagen argues that this is part of a more general multi-view pictorial system.
- Artists face the general problem of rendering a 3D object on a 2D surface.
- Mainstream pictures do this by showing one view of the object. But in principle, why not combine multiple views?



Whale



Eagle



Bear



61 Carved and painted chest, Tlingit. The double-eye form of the face is seen above. The peculiar orientation of the end design is apparent below. Unknown Tlingit artist, Chest with Lid, about 1850, Denver Art Museum Collection. Purchased from the University of Washington, 1950.526. Photograph © Denver Art Museum.

Violin

- Cubism was a movement in 20th century European art that explored combined viewpoints, but in a comparatively unsystematic way.

