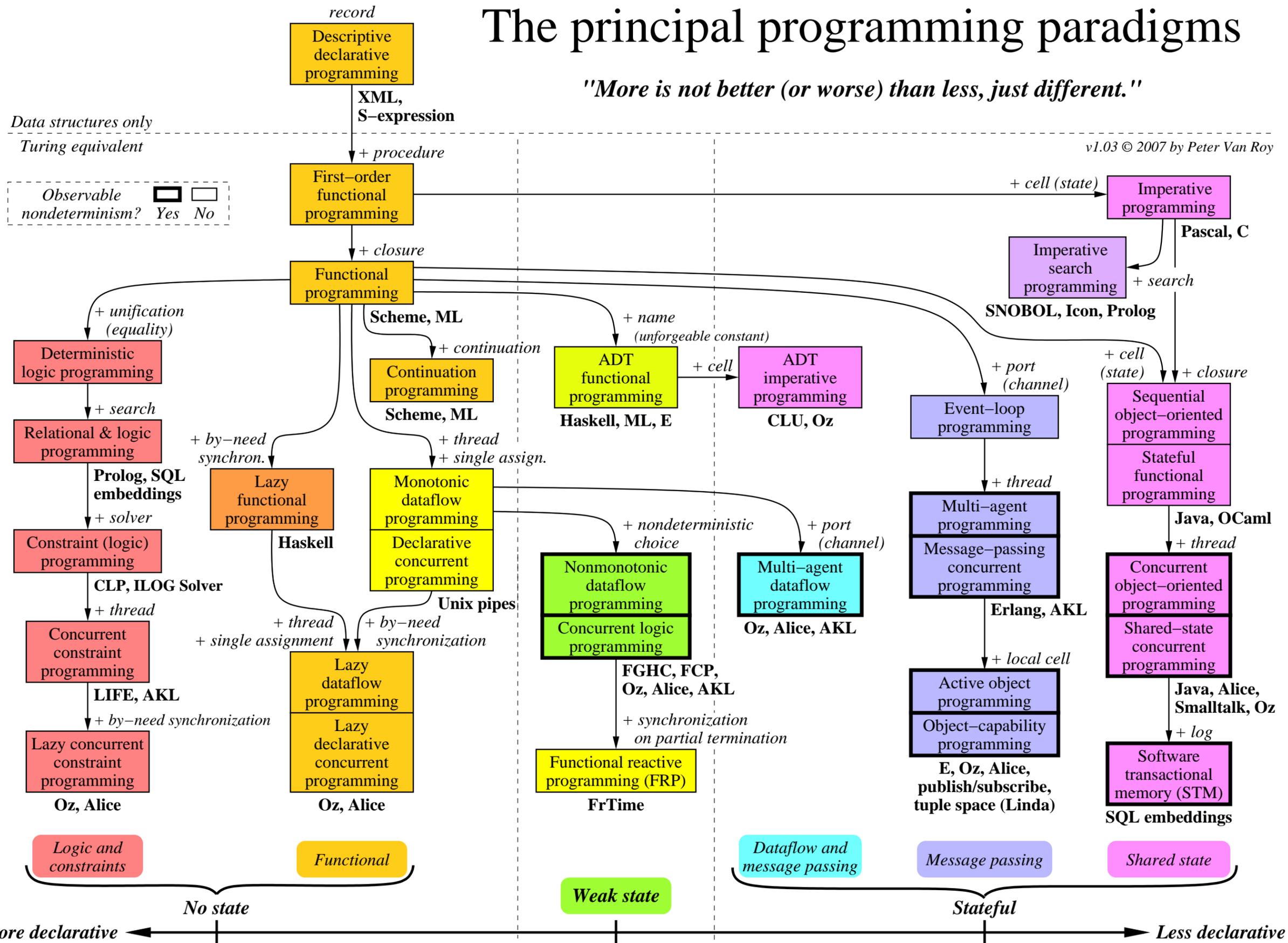


# The principal programming paradigms

"More is not better (or worse) than less, just different."

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## Clarifications

This chart is inspired by "Concepts, Techniques, and Models of Computer Programming" (MIT Press, 2004).

The chart classifies programming paradigms according to their kernel languages (the small core language in which all the paradigm's abstractions can be defined). Kernel languages are ordered according to the creative extension principle: a new concept is added when it cannot be encoded with only local transformations. Two languages that implement the same paradigm can nevertheless have very different "flavors" for the programmer, because they make different choices on what programming techniques and styles to facilitate.

When a language is mentioned under a paradigm, it means that part of the language is intended (by its designers) to support the paradigm without interference from other paradigms. It does not mean that there is a perfect fit between the language and the paradigm. It is not enough that libraries have been written in the language to support the paradigm. The language's kernel language should support the paradigm. When there is a family of related languages, usually only one member of the family is mentioned to avoid clutter. The absence of a language does not imply any kind of value judgment.

Axes that are orthogonal to this chart are typing, aspects, and domain-specificity. Typing is not completely orthogonal: it has some effect on expressiveness. Aspects should be completely orthogonal, since they are part of a program's specification. A domain-specific language should be definable in any paradigm (except when the domain needs a particular concept).

Metaprogramming is another way to increase the expressiveness of a language. The term covers many different approaches, from higher-order programming, syntactic extensibility (e.g., macros), to higher-order programming combined with syntactic support (e.g., meta-object protocols and generics), to full-fledged tinkering with the kernel language (introspection and reflection). Syntactic extensibility and kernel language tinkering in particular are orthogonal to this chart. Some languages, such as Scheme, are flexible enough to implement many paradigms in almost native fashion. This flexibility is not shown in the chart.