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has been found, said Cartwright.

On the other hand the existence of lifelike biomimetic structures in ice suggests that nature may well have copied physics. It is even possible that while ice is too cold to support most life as we know it, it may have provided a suitable internal environment for prebiotic life to have emerged.

It is clear that biology does use physics, said Cartwright. Indeed, how could it not do? So we shouldn't be surprised to see that sometimes biological structures clearly make use of simple physical principles. Then, going back in time, it seems reasonable to posit that when life first emerged, it would have been using as a container something much simpler than today's cell membrane, probably some sort of simple vesicle of the sort found in soap bubbles. This sort of vesicle can be found in abiotic systems today, both in hot conditions, in the chemistry associated with 'black smokers' on the sea floor, which is currently favoured as a possible origin of life, but also in the chemistry of sea ice.

This is an intriguing idea that will be explored further in projects spawned by the ESF workshop. This may provide a new twist to the idea that life arrived from space. It may be that the precursors of life came from space, but that the actual carbon based biochemistry of all organisms on Earth evolved on this planet.

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