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Astronomy

Chemistry on a cosmic scale

These swirls of dust and gas are part of the Orion nebula, as seen by the James Webb Space Telescope in infrared. Follow the vertical line up from the large central star to the boundary of the orange and blue gas. If you look to the right of the nearest star, you should see a tiny yellow blob. This is a protoplanetary disc, from which planets form. It is the first found to contain methyl cations, a kind of carbon compound thought to be important in interstellar chemistry.

ESA/WEBB, NASA, CSA, M. ZAMANI/PDRS4ALL ERSTEAM