Nicolaas Bloembergen Encyclopedia Article

Nicolaas Bloembergen

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Nicolaas Bloembergen

1920-

Dutch-American physicist who won the Nobel Prize for work leading to the first continuous maser. The maser (a microwave equivalent of the laser) had been invented in 1954 by Charles Townes, but operated only in pulses. Two years later, Bloembergen developed a method that generated continuous maser emissions, an important advance towards the invention of the laser in 1960. Since then, several hundred natural masers have been discovered in space. Bloembergen was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1981.