Robert Sanderson Mulliken Encyclopedia Article

Robert Sanderson Mulliken

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Robert Sanderson Mulliken

1896-1986

American chemical physicist who was awarded the 1966 Nobel Prize for Chemistry for applying quantum theory to explain molecular structure. In 1928 he published his molecular orbital method of chemical bonding, according to which the energy levels of bonding electrons in molecules are determined by quantum mechanical properties of the molecules, not independent atomic characteristics. Mulliken's orbital method was adopted by quantum chemists in the 1950s, having competing with Linus Pauling's valence bond method for two decades.