

Agency, Autonomy, and the Fairy Tale: Exploring Sleeping Beauty

Riley Clever

Advised by:
Claire Eager, Ph.D.
Garrett Thomson, Ph.D.

Abstract

This project considers how to conceptualize autonomy and why it is important that we are careful in this conception. Popular conceptions of autonomy include ideas of control which often fail to recognize the intrinsic value of agents. Self-respect turns autonomy back to the capabilities of the agent and recognizes the agent's intrinsic value. I then apply these conceptions to six versions of Sleeping Beauty to consider how certain conceptions can alter the messaging surrounding autonomy in each tale.

Literary Conclusions

In almost all the versions of Sleeping Beauty I considered, the princess has some level of autonomy under the self-respect conception. The self-respect conception proved more inclusive and more accessible for many different characters, showing readers that a variety of agents can achieve autonomy and can do so through various ways.

Problematic Conceptions of Autonomy

- **Autonomy-as-a-right Conception**
 - “the right to make otherwise morally permissible decisions about matters deeply affecting one’s own life without interference” (Thomas Hill)
- **Individualistic Conception**
 - An agent should be able to make his own choices free from external influence, emphasizing the individual in opposition to the world around them (See John Stuart Mill)
- **Relational Conception**
 - Relational autonomy deals with how external factors should be incorporated into theories of autonomy. (See Ji-Young Lee)

All make control a necessary part of autonomy!

- control fails to recognize intrinsic value of agents
- instrumentalizes the agent

Autonomy as Self-Respect

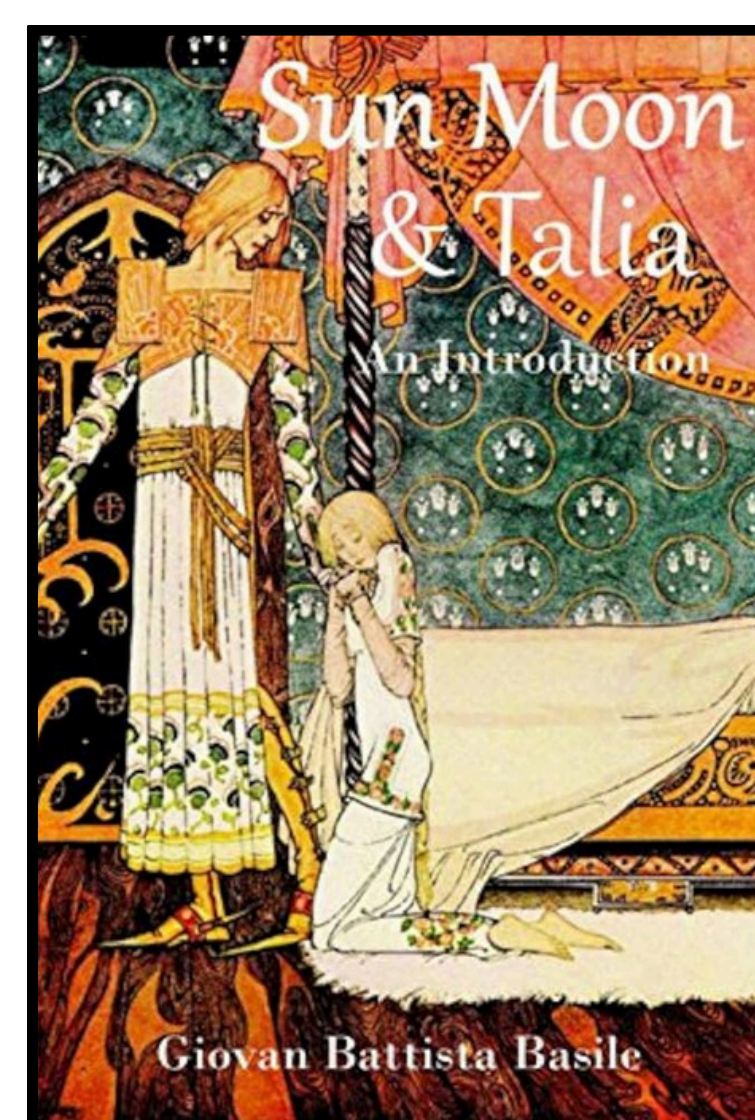
- Immanuel Kant
 - the intrinsic value of the agent makes persons an object of respect
- Thomas Hill
 - “There are nonutilitarian moral reasons for each person, regardless of his merits, to respect himself.”

Autonomy is the ability to act with respect to your capacities as an agent.

Respect and Well-being

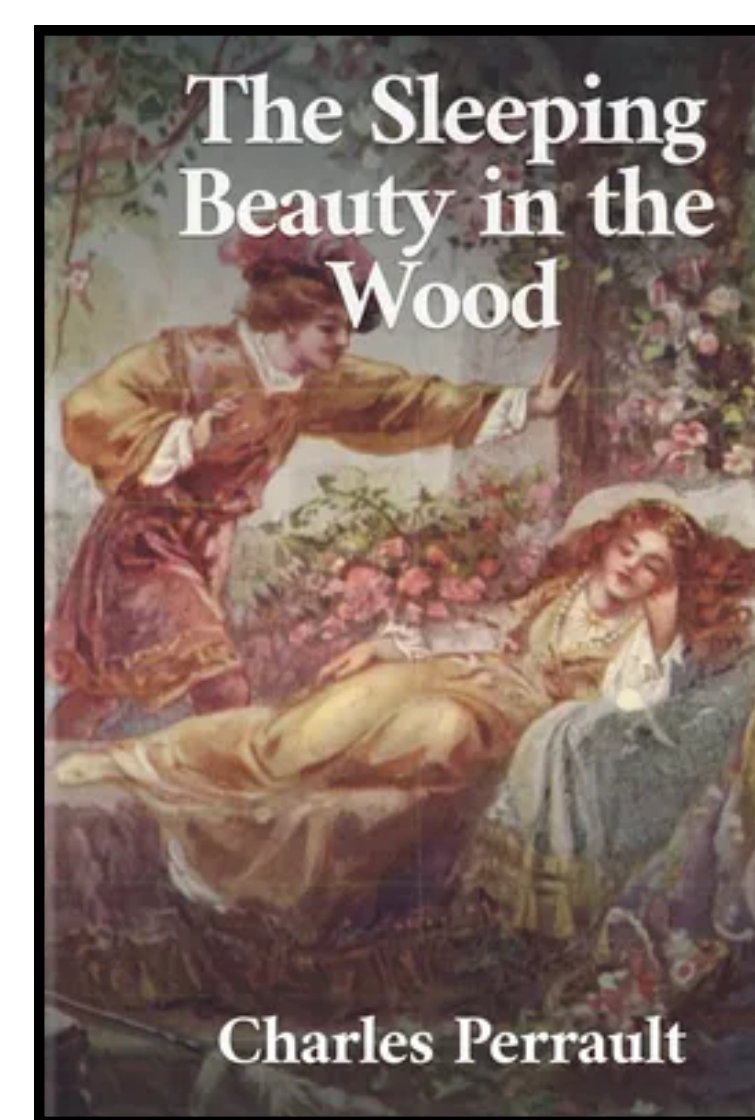
- Well-being is multifaceted
 - one part is the relationship with the self
- Autonomy as self-respect uniquely matches the qualities of living well
 - Thus, autonomy as self-respect directly makes up an aspect of well-being

Six Versions of Sleeping Beauty Considered



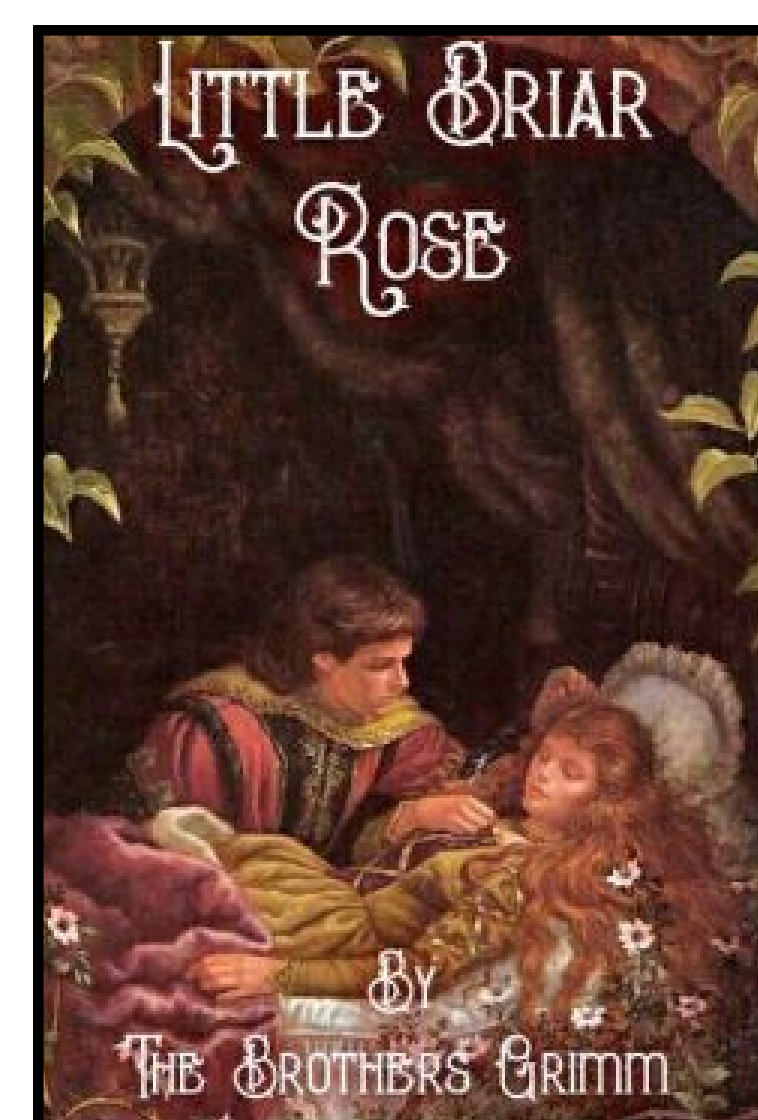
Sun, Moon, and Talia

- Written by Giambattista Basile
- 1634 (Italy)



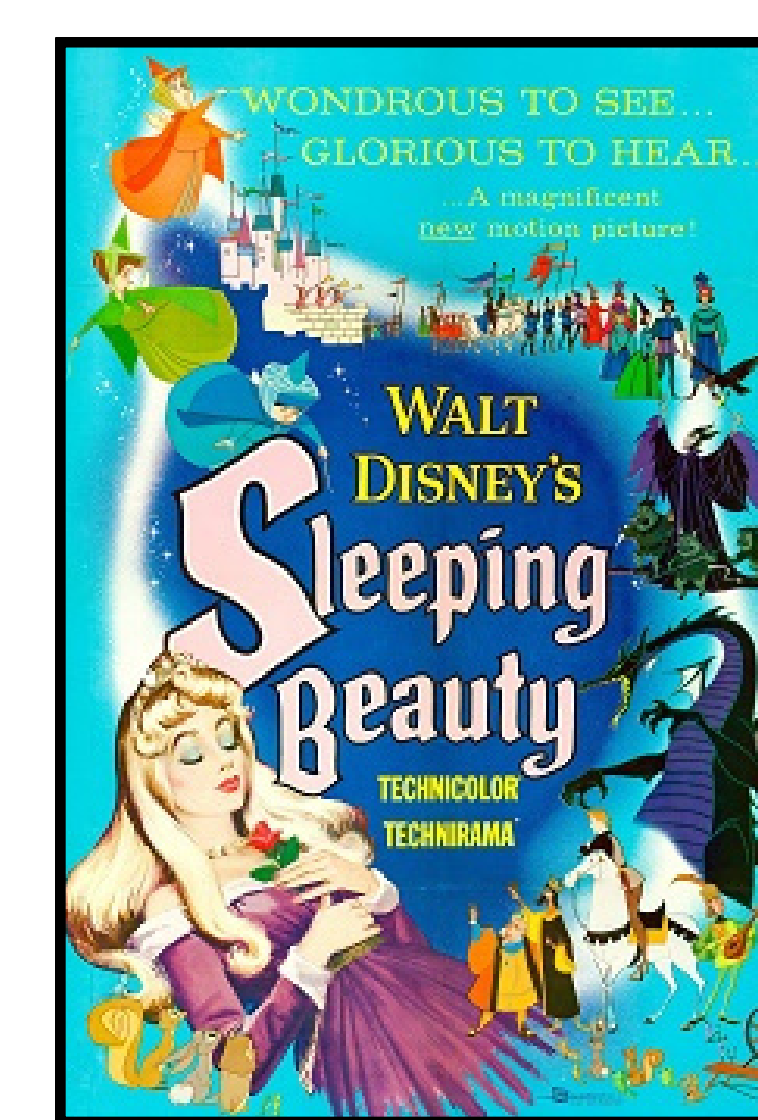
The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood

- Written by Charles Perrault
- 1750 (France)



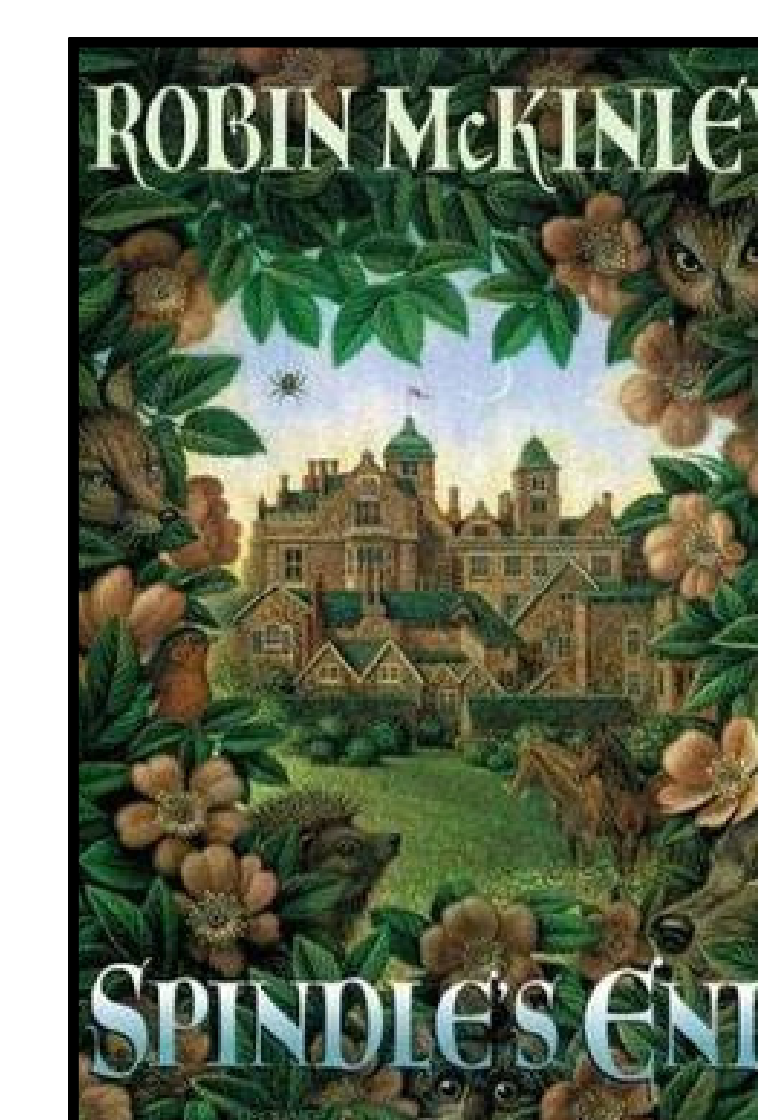
Little Briar Rose

- Written by the Grimm brothers
- 1812 (Germany)



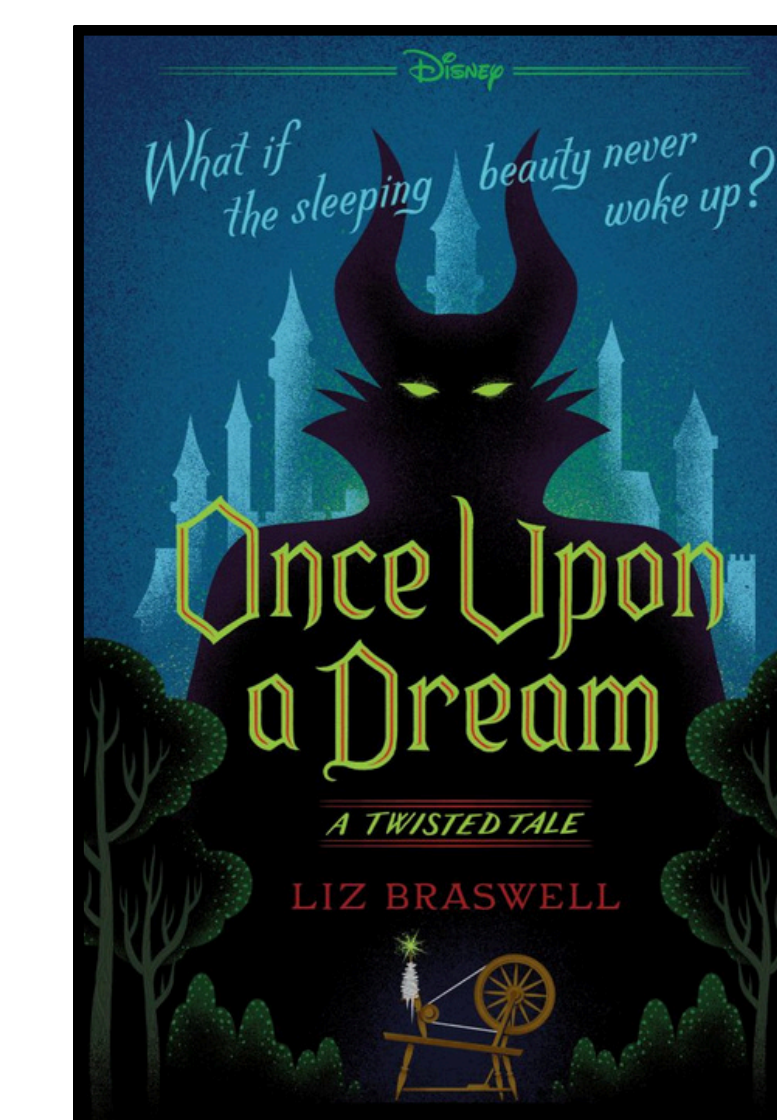
Sleeping Beauty

- Film by Walt Disney Studios
- 1959 (USA)



Spindle's End

- Written by Robin McKinley
- 2000 (USA)



Once Upon A Dream: A Twisted Tale

- Written by Liz Braswell
- 2017 (USA)