

**\*\*Title:\*\*** \*Aurora A. Anaya vs. Fernando O. Palaroan\*: A Case of Failed Marriage Annulment Due to the Non-Disclosure of Pre-Marital Relationship

**\*\*Facts:\*\***

This case revolves around an appeal concerning the dismissal of a complaint for annulment of marriage filed by Aurora A. Anaya (plaintiff-appellant) against her husband, Fernando O. Palaroan (defendant-appellee). The marriage, solemnized on December 4, 1953, became contentious when Fernando sought annulment in January 1954 citing force and intimidation for his consent—a claim dismissed by the Court of First Instance of Manila in September 1959, affirming the marriage’s validity.

Subsequently, during negotiations for the counterclaim settlement post-verdict, Fernando disclosed his pre-marital relationship with a close relative. Aurora then sought annulment of their marriage on grounds of “fraud” in obtaining her consent due to Fernando’s failure to disclose this pre-marital relationship, alongside a claim for moral damages.

Fernando denied the allegations and argued against Aurora’s action based on estoppel and the absence of a cause of action, given her earlier affirmative stance on the marriage’s validity. In a reply, Aurora added new allegations, claiming Fernando courted her with no intention of fulfilling marital duties.

Before proceeding to trial, the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court, upon review, identified legal insufficiency in Aurora’s fraud claim based on precedent (*Brown vs. Yambao*), leading to a *motu proprio* dismissal of the complaint after deeming Aurora’s ensuing memorandum inadequate.

**\*\*Issues:\*\***

1. Whether the non-disclosure of a pre-marital relationship by Fernando constitutes fraud under Article 85, No. 4, of the Civil Code, justifying annulment.
2. Whether Aurora’s additional allegations in the reply introduce a new cause of action warranting reconsideration of the dismissal.

**\*\*Court’s Decision:\*\***

The Supreme Court affirmed the dismissal. It concluded the non-disclosure did not meet the fraud criteria for annulment under Article 85, No. 4, and Article 86 of the Civil Code. The latter limits “fraud” to specific cases excluding any misrepresentation concerning character,

chastity, rank, or fortune.

Regarding Aurora's further claims in the reply, the Court clarified these allegations constituted a new cause of action, improperly introduced at this stage of the proceeding. Even if considered, the claim based on the secret intention not to perform marital duties, discovered after the marriage, would be barred by the four-year prescriptive period for such actions.

**\*\*Doctrine:\*\***

The case reaffirms that fraud, as a ground for marriage annulment under Article 85, No. 4, of the Civil Code, is narrowly defined within specific parameters outlined in Article 86. Only explicit forms of deceit stipulated—misrepresentation of identity, concealment of a criminal past, and non-disclosure of pre-marital pregnancy—are actionable. Additionally, inserting a new cause of action in a reply is procedurally improper.

**\*\*Class Notes:\*\***

- Elements of Fraud in Annulment: Misrepresentation must pertain directly to the identity of one party, non-disclosure of a crime involving moral turpitude, or concealment of pre-marital pregnancy. (Art. 86, Civil Code)
- Estoppel & Cause of Action: Estoppel may apply when a party's previous conduct contradicts their legal claim. A cause of action must be based on specific legal grounds established from the outset and cannot be amended or newly introduced in a reply.
- Prescription Period: Actions based on secret intentions not disclosed at marriage commencement must be filed within four years of the wedding.
- Procedural Protocol: Introducing a new cause of action in procedural documents following the original complaint, such as a reply, is not allowed and is considered procedurally improper.

**\*\*Historical Background:\*\***

This case elucidates the stringent confines within which marital fraud must be claimed for an annulment under Philippine law, emphasizing the legal system's preservation of marriage as a societal institution beyond individual grievances. It underscores the Civil Code's particular stance on what constitutes sufficient deceit to void a marriage, reflective of the era's conservative view on marital permanence and the protection of social order over personal predicaments.