

MARIA LUISA MARTINEZ, PETITIONER, VS. MANUEL H. BARREDO, ET AL., RESPONDENTS.*G. R. No. 49308. May 13, 1948*

Ponente: PARAS, J.

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On April 11, 1940, a taxicab owned by Fausto Barredo and driven by Rosendo Digman collided in a Manila thorough fare with a Chevrolet car driven by Maria Luisa Martinez. The collision gave rise to mutual charges for damage to property through reckless imprudence, one by Maria Luisa Martinez against Digman, and the other by Fausto Barredo against Maria Luisa Martinez. After investigation, the fiscal filed an information against Digman and quashed Barredo's complaint. Digman entered a plea of guilty in his criminal case and was therefore sentenced to pay a fine of P605.97 and to indemnify Maria Luisa Martinez in the same amount, with subsidiary imprisonment in case of insolvency, and the costs. Digman failed to pay any of these amounts and had to undergo corresponding subsidiary imprisonment. Due to the inability of Digman to pay the indemnity, Maria Luisa Martinez, filed an action in the Court of First Instance of Manila against Fausto Barredo, as Digman's employer, for the purpose of holding him subsidiarily liable for said indemnity under articles 102 and 103 of the Revised Penal code. At the trial Maria Luisa Martinez relied solely on the judgment of conviction against Rosendo Digman, the writ of execution Issued against him, a certificate of the Director of Prisons regarding Digman's service of subsidiary imprisonment, and the information filed against Digman. Maria Luisa Martinez obtained a favorable judgment from which Barredo appealed to the Court of Appeals. The latter court, reversing the decision of the Court of First Instance, held that the Judgment of conviction was not conclusive against Barredo and its weight as prima facie evidence was overcome by the evidence presented by Barredo. Hence the present appeal of Maria Luisa Martinez by way of certiorari.

The important question is whether a judgment of conviction sentencing the defendant to pay an indemnity is conclusive in an action against his employer for the enforcement of the latter's subsidiary liability under articles 102 and 103 of the Revised Penal Code. The appealed decision makes reference to two earlier decisions of this Court, namely, *City of Manila vs. Manila Electric Co.*, 52 Phil. 586, holding that such judgment of conviction is not admissible, and *Arambulo vs. Manila Electric Co.*, 55 Phil. 75, in effect holding that it is merely prima facie evidence, and to the prevailing view in the United States to the effect that the person subsidiarily liable is bound by the judgment if the former had notice of the criminal case and could have defended it had he seen fit to do so, and that otherwise such judgment is only prima facie evidence.

After very careful reflection, we have arrived at the opinion that the judgment of conviction, in the absence of any collusion between the defendant and the offended party, should bind the person subsidiarily liable. The stigma of a criminal conviction surpasses in effect and implications mere civil liability. Common sense dictates that a finding of guilt in a criminal case in which proof beyond reasonable doubt is necessary, should not be nullified in a subsequent civil action requiring only preponderance of evidence to support a judgment, unless those who support the contrary rule should also hold that an absolution in a civil case will operate to automatically set aside

the verdict against the defendant in the criminal case. It is anomalous, to say the least, to suppose that the driver, excelling "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", could be guilty of reckless negligence in so far as his obligation to pay indemnity is concerned, and at the same time could be free from any blame when said indemnity is sought to be collected from his employer, although the right to the indemnity arose from and was based on one and the same act of the driver.

The employer cannot be said to have been deprived of his day in court, because the situation before us is not one wherein the employer is sued for a primary liability under article 1903 of the Civil Code, but one in which enforcement is sought of a subsidiary civil liability incident to and dependent upon his driver's criminal negligence which is a proper issue to be tried and decided only in a criminal action. In other words, the employer becomes ipso facto subsidiarily liable upon his driver's conviction and upon proof of the latter's insolvency, in the same way that acquittal wipes out not only the employee's primary civil liability but also his employer's subsidiary liability for such criminal negligence. (Almeida et al. v. Abaroa, 8 Phil. 178, affirmed in 218 U.S. 476, 54 L. ed. 1116; Wise & Co. v. Larion, 45 Phil. 314, 320; Francisco v. Onrubia, 46 Phil. 327; Province of Ilocos Sur v. Tolentino, G. R. No. 34186, 56 Phil. 829; Moran, Comments on the Rules of Court, Vol. II, p. 403.)

It is high time that the employer exercised the greatest care in selecting his employees, taking real and deep interest in their welfare; intervening in any criminal action brought against them by reason of or as a result of the performance of their duties, if only in the way of giving them the benefit of counsel; and consequently doing away with the practice of leaving them to their fates. If these be done, the American rule requiring notice on the part of the employer shall have been satisfied.

It becomes unnecessary to rely on the circumstance that the filing of mutual charges by Fausto Barredo and Maria Luisa Martinez, with the result, as above stated, that while the fiscal proceeded in filing the information against Digman, he quashed the charges of Fausto Barredo, may easily lead to the presumption that the latter should have had knowledge of the criminal case against his driver. We need not also make any pronouncement to the effect that the prevailing American view is based upon substantive and procedural laws not similar to those obtaining in this jurisdiction.

Wherefore, the decision of the Court of Appeals is reversed, and Fausto Barredo, now substituted by his heirs and legal representatives, are hereby sentenced to pay, subject to Executive Order No. 32 on Moratorium, to the petitioner, Maria Luisa Martinez, the sum of P605.97, with, legal interest from the date of the filing of the complaint. So ordered with costs against the respondents.

Pablo, Perfecto, Bengzon, and Briones, JJ., concur.

CONCURRING

PERFECTO, J.:

The proposition that a final judgment of conviction against an accused cannot be admitted as evidence in a civil action for damages against the same accused to prove the facts upon which the judgment was founded appears to us so shocking to common sense as to merit being classified in the category of a judicial doctrine. The fact that the proposition has been and is supported by a number of wise judges and respectable authors on evidence does not add an iota of value to the proposition. This does not imply any intention to disparage or any suggestion that said judges and authors less deserve our respect. We only mean to express an honest opinion dictated by conscience, over and above any pretense of dogmatism or infallibility on the part of those who see things differently.

When the offended spouse in a case of adultery or concubinage institutes a civil action for divorce, according to our laws and judicial practice, the plaintiff need not present again the evidence for the prosecution upon which a judgment of conviction was rendered in the criminal proceeding so as to prove the facts constituting the legal ground for divorce. Such laws and judicial practice are in accordance with the way of reasoning and sense of logic and justice of our people. There is no perceivable valid ground why the same rule and practice should not be followed in a civil case for the enforcement of a civil liability subsidiary to the main civil liability springing from the criminal offense of damage to property. It is not easy to understand why our own logic has to be surrendered to the dicta of authority, whether domestic or foreign, adverse to the dictates of our own conscience.

In the case at bar, according to the express provisions of the Revised Penal Code, respondents liability was and is dependent on the criminal responsibility of his driver. That criminal responsibility entails civil liability for damages of the guilty chauffeur. When the latter cannot meet that civil responsibility, the obligation to satisfy the same devolves by law upon his employer who, therefore, has to shoulder a subsidiary civil liability. Once the criminal offense from which the principal and subsidiary civil liability arises has been proved conclusively by the final conviction of the guilty driver, there is no sense in contending that, in the civil action to enforce the subsidiary liability, the final judgment of conviction cannot be admitted as conclusive evidence and the offended party has to go to the trouble of reproducing or repeating evidence for the prosecution in the criminal case.

The employer cannot invoke the protection of the due process of law clause, because by express provision of the Revised Penal Code, upon the institution of the criminal proceedings against his driver, he becomes a party in the criminal proceedings, in virtue of his subsidiary civil liability. The law presumes that the employer cannot fail to be acquainted with the criminal proceedings, the presumption being based on the very nature of things, and, in the present case, there is conclusive evidence that the employer was cognizant of the criminal proceedings against his driver. The presumption of the law is based on actual experience. When a taxicab, used for public service, causes damage to property by the recklessness of its driver, the owner of the taxicab will surely take notice of the criminal prosecution instituted against his driver, not only because the owner cannot fail to notice the damage that his taxicab may have suffered, but because the driver has to be suspended from the service by the employer in view of the former's offense or of the suspension of his driver's license.

CONFORME

BRIONES, M.:

Estoy conforme con la ponencia. Me reservo, sin embargo, el registrar un dictamen separado para mas tarde.

DISSENTING

FERIA, J., with whom concurs MORAN, C.J.:

It is well settled that a judgment of conviction of a defendant in a criminal proceeding can not be admitted in evidence in a civil action for damages against the same defendant to prove the facts upon which it was founded, Wharton's Criminal Evidence, 11th ed. pp. 1462-1463; Jones on Evidence, 1938 ed. pp. 1119-1120; 5 Wigmore on Evidence, 3rd ed. p. 689; 2 Freeman on Judgment, fifth ed. Sec. 653; 54 C. J., Sec. 1388, p. 971; 30 American Jurisprudence, Sec. 293, p. 1005.

There seems to be a tendency to relax the rule, and in several cases, among them *Magbie v. Avery*, 18 Johns, 532, quoted in *Schnidler v. Royal, Ins. Co. of City of New York v. Militello*, 100 Colo. 343, 67 Pac. 2w. 625, quoted in

5 Wigmore on Evidence, 3rd ed. pp. 692-693, and *Approximately Fifty Nine Gambling Devises v. People*, ex rel. Burke, 130 Pac. 2nd ed. 920, the judgment of conviction in a criminal action was admitted, in a civil case against the same defendant, as prima facie evidence by the facts involved, having the legal effect of shifting the burden of going forward with the evidence. But the rule has never been relaxed to the extent of regarding a judgment of conviction as conclusive, in a civil action against the same defendants of the facts adjudicated in the criminal action. The only case in which it was so considered is *Eagle Star British Dominion, Ins. Co. v. Heller*, 149 Va. 82, 123, A. L. R. 490, referred to in 30 of Am. Jur., Sec. 293, p. 1005 which was not followed in *Same v. Davidson*, 1 NYS (2nd) 374, by the Court of Appeals of New York, and in *North River Ins. Co. of City of New York v. Milirello*, 100 Col. 343, 67 Pao. 2d 625, (quoted with approval by Prof. Wigmore in his work on Evidence, Vol. V, p. 693), in which the Supreme court of Colorado said that "it would be more definitely a legislative function to declare such a public policy" of regarding the judgment as "conclusive evidence for the purpose of establishing a material fact even though such fact was the basis of the conviction."

Mr. Morgan, Professor of Evidence in Yale University and member of the American Institute of law, in discussing on May 7, 1941, the tentative draft of Sec. 621 of the Code of Evidence which provides that "A subsisting judgment adjudicating a person guilty of a crime or misdemeanor is admissible as tending to prove the facts recited therein and every fact essential to sustain the judgment," said the following:

"Rule 621. Judgments of Conviction—goes farther than the cases do because it makes a judgment of conviction admissible wherever it is relevant. The present cases admit it against a defendant; that is a majority of them—may be I am going too far. The majority of the modern cases admit it against a defendant who has been convicted and against his privies so far as we have those cases; then there are some statutes that admit it in cases where another person is charged with the same crime. We have gone farther than that, and we believe that the reason back of the rule is that it is just as applicable generally as in the particular cases which the common law recognizes. There is one case that makes it conclusive evidence in every case, *Heller v. Insurance Company*. The New York Court of Appeals refused to follow this case, and it stands alone." (The American Law Institute, Vol. XVIII, p. 184).

Presumably the decision of the New York Court of Appeals which refused to follow the ruling in *Heller v. Insurance Co.* and to which Prof. Morgan refers, is that rendered in *Same v. Davison* (1937) 253 App. Div. 123, 1 NYS (2d) 374, in which it was held that "in an action for damages arising out of an automobile collision the judgment of the conviction of the defendant, upon a plea of guilty to a violation of a city ordinance for driving at more than 25 miles per hour at the time of the accident, was prima facie evidence of the facts involved." (130 A. L. R. A., p. 700).

The chief reason for excluding the judgment of a criminal prosecution from evidence in a civil case is that the parties to the two proceedings are different. One who has been damaged by some criminal act of another has a claim for remuneration, independent of the right of the public to proceed against the offender, and to inflict the penalty prescribed by law. This right to compensation in damage sought not to be, and is not, dependent on the success or failure of the prosecution conducted by the people. If it were, the party most injured would be prejudiced by a proceeding to which he was not a party, and which he had no power to control. A person convicted of any offense is not estopped by the conviction from disputing the facts on which it is based in a civil action, because his adversary in the civil action would not have barred if the prosecution had terminated in an acquittal. While the difference in parties and lack of mutuality are a logical and sufficient reason in most cases for this general rule, other reasons given are the different rules of evidence and procedure which prevail in civil and criminal cases and the differing degrees of proof required. But the only real occasion or necessity for resorting to the latter class of reasons is in those cases where the parties are the same." (2 Freeman on Judgments, 5th ed., Sec. 654, p. 1379).

In the United States the criminal action and civil action against the offender are instituted separately and that practice necessitated the formulation of the said rule. In this jurisdiction, "When the criminal action is instituted the civil action for recovery of civil liability arising from the offense charged is impliedly instituted with the criminal action," and the court must make a pronouncement in the criminal action on the civil liability of the defendant (section 1 (a), Rule 107), Therefore the rule above set forth may be applied only where the offended party has reserved expressly his right to institute, and institutes separately from the criminal action, the civil action for damages arising out of the criminal offense; because the reasons above set forth underlying the rule in the United States are the same or applicable in tills jurisdiction, except in case the judgment of acquittal of the defendant is based on the ground "that the fact from which the civil (action) might arise did not exist" in which case it would be a bar to civil action. (Section l (d) Rule 108, Rules of Court.)

In *Guevara v. Almario, et al.*, 56 Phil. 476, which was a civil action instituted by the offended party against the same defendant for damages arising from libel of which the latter was convicted, this Supreme Court admitted the judgment of conviction in a criminal prosecution, not as a conclusive but prima facie evidence of defendant's conviction showing that he was the author of the libelous article. The defendant Almario was condemned to pay the civil indemnity for damages caused to the offended party by libel, because, according to the decision, when the case was called for trial "the defendants produced no evidence and contented themselves with filing a motion for the dismissal of the case, which was denied." The ruling in this case is correct and in accordance with the modern pendency to relax the above-quoted rule of absolute inadmissibility of a judgment of conviction of a defendant in (a criminal case, and make it admissible as prima facie evidence of the facts on which it is based in a civil action for damages against the same defendant; but the cases of *City of Manila v. Manila Electric Co.*, 52 Phil. 536, and *Arambulo v. Manila Electric Co.*, 55 Phil. 75, 76, therein cited, were not applicable to the question involved in said case of *Guevara v. Almario*; because the former were civil actions instituted by the offended parties against the Manila Electric Co., an employer subsidiarily liable "for damages arising from the felonious acts of which the employees of the Manila Electric Co., Inc. were convicted in criminal cases to which the said Manila Electric was not a party.

The law applicable in a civil action instituted by the offended party against a person subsidiarily liable for damages arising out of the offense of which an accused was convicted, is the well established rule that "Agents and principals including, of course masters and servants, do not, as such, have any mutual and successive relationship to right of property. They are not in privity with each other. Consequently the principal or master is not bound on the judgment obtained in an action by or against the agent or servant, and vice versa, "unless the latter were a party or privy thereto by having authorized, or actually and openly prosecuted or defended the action, or by having been notified and given an opportunity to defend under circumstances requiring him to do so." (1 Freeman on Judgments, Sec. 468, pp. 1027, 1028). The reason is that "when a person is responsible over to another, either by operation of law or by express contract, and notice has been given him of the pendency of the suit, and he has been requested to take upon himself the defense of it, he is no longer regarded as a stranger to the judgment that may be recovered, because he has a right to appear and defend the action equally as if he were a party to the record x x x whether he has appeared or not." (*Davis v. Smith*, 79 Me., 351, 10 Atl., 55.)

It is evident that in a civil action against a person other than the defendant, the judgment of conviction is not admissible, not only as conclusive, but even as prima facie evidence of the facts on which it is based, because the reason for admitting it as prima facie evidence is that the defendant was a party in the criminal action, and though the offended party was not and the government is the complainant, the defendant had all the safeguards afforded by law to enable him to make his defense, examine the witnesses for the prosecution, testify in his own behalf, and appeal. But the person subsidiarily liable is not, and can not be, a party to a criminal action against the accused or person primarily liable, and therefore could not defend or protect his rights or interests.

The question involved in this appeal is the admissibility and evidentiary force or inadmissibility of a judgment of conviction in a civil action instituted by the offended party, not against the same accused, but against a third person subsidiarily liable for the damage arising out of the criminal act committed by the defendant. It is evident that the judgment in a criminal action not being admissible, in a civil action against the same defendant, who was one of the parties in the criminal action, as conclusive evidence of the facts on which it is based, it follows a fortiori that it can not be admitted as such in a civil action for damages against a person subsidiarily liable therefor who was not a party in the criminal action, as the respondents Barredo in the present case.

In accordance with the above-quoted general rule or inadmissibility of a judgment of conviction in a criminal case as evidence of the facts on which it is based in a civil action the person subsidiarily liable, this Court, in *City of Manila v. Manila Electric Co.*, 52 Phil. 586, and *Arambulo v. City of Manila*, 55 Phil. 75, 76, held that a judgment of conviction is not admissible as evidence of the facts on which it is based, but it may be admitted "to show the collateral or incidental fact of the defendant's conviction for that offense, which gave rise to the civil liability on his part, and for which the defendant appellant is subsidiarily liable according to Art. 20 of said Code." That is to say: It is admissible to prove only that the servant or employee has been convicted to pay the civil indemnity on his part, and therefore, as he was insolvent, the offended has a cause of action against the master or employer to make him subsidiarily liable; because without proving the conviction of the employee to pay, the civil liability and his insolvency, the employer can not be made subsidiarily liable even if he proves that the employee has committed the offense through reckless negligence. For that reason, the plaintiff had to present evidence to show that the motorman was negligent and imprudent in running the car belonging to the defendants Manila Electric Co., and the latter was allowed to prove his defenses, although the court held that the defense that the employer has "acted with the diligence of a good father of a family is not applicable to the subsidiary civil liability provided in article 20 of the Penal Code."

This Court can not consider the judgment of conviction admissible even as a prima facie evidence of the facts on which it is based, for the simple reason that, as already shown, the first quoted relaxed rule applies only to civil action for recovery of civil liability against the same defendant, who was a party in the criminal action. Section 44 (b), Rule 39, provides that a judgment is only "conclusive between the parties and their successors in interest by title subsequent to the commencement of the action." Section 46 of the same Rule says that "when a party is bound by the record [or judgment] and such party stands in the relation of surety for another, the latter is also bound from the time he has notice of the action and an opportunity at the surety's request to join in the defense." Section 10, Rule 123, prescribes that "the rights of a party can not be prejudiced by the act, declaration or omission of another, and proceedings against one can not affect another except as hereinafter provided," and an employer subsidiarily liable for the act of his employee is not one of the exceptions provided for in Sections 11, 12, 13 of the same Rule. And according to section 37 of the same Rule 123, the only case in which the testimony of a witness in a former trial may be given in evidence in another is where the parties and the matter are the same, and the party against whom it is to be presented has had an opportunity to cross examine the witness, and the latter is already dead, out of the Philippines, or unable to testify.

In the present case, the judgment of conviction which sentenced the driver to pay besides the fine the amount of P651 as civil damages, is not admissible as conclusive or binding upon his employers, the respondents Barredo, because said judgment was rendered in a criminal action in which the latter could not have actually and openly defended the action, even if they knew or were notified thereof of the pendency thereof, because, not only they were not required under the circumstances to do so, but because they had no opportunity; to defend their interest in the criminal action. They had no opportunity because they are not allowed by law to intervene, present the accused as a witness in his behalf, and appeal from the judgment of the Court in the criminal action. Only offended parties are permitted by law to intervene, besides the Government and the accused; and therefore

whether or not the respondents Barredo were notified or had knowledge of the pendency of the civil action against their employee, is of no consequence.

All the foregoing clearly show that the conclusion arrived at by the majority that "the judgment of Conviction in the absence of any collusion between the defendant and the offended party should bind the person subsidiarily liable," is not correct. It is contrary to the fundamental principle that no one shall be condemned or made answerable without an opportunity to defend, that in order to bind one by a judgment to which he is not a party, he should be allowed all means of defense open to him had he been made a party." (1 Freeman on Judgments, 5th ed., section 449, p. 934).

The premises or arguments on which said conclusion is predicated are without any foundation. The contention that "the stigma of a criminal conviction surpasses in effect and implication mere civil liability," may be true as to the civil liability of the sane employee or servant, but not of the employer or master who was not and could not be a party to the criminal action even if he had wanted to and the assertion that "common sense dictates that a finding of guilt in a criminal case in which proof beyond a reasonable doubt is necessary should not be nullified in a subsequent action requiring preponderance of evidence to support a judgment," is not true. A decision in a civil action absolving the defendant of the complaint for damages arising out of the offense of which the same defendant was convicted or vice versa, does not nullify each other, for the simple reason that they are of different nature and effect. A defendant may be absolved in a civil action for damages arising out of an offense instituted before the criminal action and convicted as guilty of said offense. Although he be sentenced to pay the damages in civil action he may be acquitted of the offense in the criminal action subsequently instituted against him. And an accused may be acquitted in a criminal action instituted before the civil action and be sentenced to pay the civil liability arising out of the offense if the acquittal is not predicated on the fact that he did not commit the offense from which the civil liability might arise. Section 1 (d), Rule 107, Rules of the Court.

If, as contended in the last part of the decision "the employer becomes ipso facto subsidiarily liable upon his driver's conviction and upon the latter's insolvency," there would be no need of filing a separate civil action for damages against the former, since the judgment being executory may be enforced or executed against him after the writ of execution has been returned unsatisfied because of the accused's failure to pay or perform the judgment. Under the majority's theory, a master or employer would be at the mercy of an insolvent servant or employee, without necessity of any collusion or connivance with the offended party, for the former may make, at his will or whim, his master or employer responsible for damages caused by his wrongful act or misdemeanor, by confessing guilty of the offense as in the present case, admitting his tortious act under sections 1902 and 1903 of the Civil Code, or not properly defending himself in such cases. Or the separate action if presented would be a matter of form, because the judgment being conclusive against the master or employer, the latter can not present any evidence in support of his defense.

The ruling laid down by this Court in *City of Manila v. Manila Electric Co.* and reiterated in *Arambulo v. City of Manila* above quoted is squarely applicable as a precedent to this case, and there is absolutely no reason for reversing it and adopting the doctrine that the majority want to lay down, which is unprecedented and contrary to law and reason. But it is to be observed that the obiter dictum found in the decision in "*City of Manila v. Manila Electric*" supra, to the effect that the defendant corporation might have been concluded by the judgment had it supplied the lawyer for the accused, would not have been inserted by the writer of the decision, had the matter been given some consideration. A person subsidiarily liable does not take part in, and much less control, the criminal proceeding by supplying the lawyer for the accused. For said person can not file an answer for himself, cross examine the witnesses for the prosecution in his behalf, allege and prove any defenses he may have to the civil liability which the court may impose upon the defendant, compel the accused to testify as a witness, and

appeal from the judgment as to the civil indemnity. The defense is completely under the control of the accused; and the attorney supplied by the person who might be subsidiarily liable for the civil indemnity, has to defend the accused, and not any other person who is not and can not be a party without violating the elementary rules of legal ethics.

In view of all the foregoing, the judgment of the Court of Appeals is affirmed on the ground above set forth, with costs against the former. So ordered.

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