

Circuit Court for Howard County
Case No. C-13-FM-24-000725

UNREPORTED*
IN THE APPELLATE COURT
OF MARYLAND

No. 1091

September Term, 2025

BIKRAM PANT

v.

POOJA PANT

Arthur,
Ripken,
Hotten, Michele D.
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

Opinion by Arthur, J.

Filed: March 19, 2026

* This is an unreported opinion. This opinion may not be cited as precedent within the rule of stare decisis. It may be cited for its persuasive value only if the citation conforms to Maryland Rule 1-104(a)(2)(B).

In 2024 appellee Pooja Pant (“Wife”) filed a complaint for absolute divorce from appellant Bikram Pant (“Husband”). After a two-day hearing, the Circuit Court for Howard County entered a judgment of absolute divorce and an order establishing child custody and the division of marital property. Husband noted this appeal.

Husband, representing himself, has filed an informal brief. The informal brief does not delineate the questions presented, but Husband’s arguments identify the following issues:

1. Did the circuit court use an erroneous valuation for a property titled in Wife’s name?
2. Did the court erroneously fail to consider Husband’s tax debts?
3. Did the court err or abuse its discretion in awarding legal custody of the parties’ two daughters to Wife and in not dividing physical custody evenly between the parties?
4. Did the court err in failing to account for Wife’s 401(k) in the monetary award to Wife?
5. Did the court err or abuse its discretion in not establishing an access schedule for the holidays?
6. Did the court err by basing its award of child support on false testimony by Wife?
7. Did the court err or abuse its discretion in allegedly relying upon an erroneous figure for the amount of Husband’s health insurance expenses?

Finding neither error nor abuse of discretion, we shall affirm.

BACKGROUND

The parties were married in Nepal in 2007 and have three minor children: a boy who was born in 2009, a girl who was born in 2018, and another girl who was born in 2020. Both Wife and Husband hold doctoral degrees in molecular biology.

In late June 2023, Wife obtained a final domestic violence protective order for one year against Husband. Before the order expired, a court extended it for another six months.

Wife left the marital home with the children when she obtained the protective order. In April 2024 Wife filed a complaint seeking an absolute divorce.

At a two-day hearing in March 2025, Wife testified and called a number of witnesses. Husband testified on his own behalf and called no other witnesses.

According to Wife, Husband beat her regularly, attempted to control her ability to spend money, and left all of the household chores to her. She claimed that Husband forced her to pay most of the household expenses from her income and that he sent almost all of his income to his parents in Nepal so that they could purchase real estate in their names.

Husband denied those allegations. He claimed that he provided for Wife and the children and that he participated in the lives of his children.

On June 25, 2025, the circuit court issued a memorandum opinion and order, granting Wife an absolute divorce and setting forth the terms of child custody and the division of marital property. After exhaustively considering the required factors, the court determined that Wife would have sole legal custody and primary physical custody

of the two daughters and that Husband would have sole legal custody and primary physical custody of the son.

Using the figures in the parties’ financial statements, the court ordered that, “in accordance with the Maryland Child Support Guidelines,” Husband shall pay Wife \$777.00 per month. The court computed a child support arrearage, against Husband and in favor of Wife, in the amount of \$11,655.00. The court ordered Husband “to maintain all minor children on health insurance” and required “each party” to pay for the children’s extraordinary health care expenses in proportion to their incomes. For “purposes of taxes,” the court ordered that Wife “shall claim the two” daughters “as a tax exemption each year” and that Husband shall claim the son “as a tax exemption each year.” It further ordered that, when the son reaches the age of 18, “the parties shall alternate claiming the two minor children[.]”

The court denied Wife’s requests for indefinite and rehabilitative alimony. In addition, the court found that certain properties in Nepal, titled in the name of Husband’s parents, are not marital property.

After determining what was marital property and considering the relevant statutory factors, the court entered a monetary award of \$40,000.00 in favor of Wife. On the subject of retirement accounts, the court declared that Wife is entitled to half of Husband’s Thrift Savings Plan retirement account and that Husband is entitled to half of Wife’s Thrift Savings Plan retirement account. The court denied each party’s request for attorneys’ fees.

On July 23, 2025, Husband noted a timely appeal. Wife did not note a cross-appeal.

On the day after he noted his appeal, Husband filed what he called a “motion to reconsider,” which appears to have served as a template for Husband’s informal brief. Because Husband filed the “motion to reconsider” more than 10 but fewer than 30 days after the entry of judgment, the motion was, in substance, a revisory motion under Maryland Rule 2-535(a). Although Husband’s appeal did not deprive the court of fundamental jurisdiction over the motion for reconsideration, the court could not “frustrate the actions of an appellate court[.]” by entering a post-appeal order that affected the subject matter of the appeal—e.g., by granting the revisory motion in whole or in part. *See, e.g., In re Emileigh F.*, 355 Md. 198, 202-03 (1999). The court did, however, revise its judgment, but only to address an alleged ambiguity concerning Husband’s access to his daughters. Neither party appealed from the ruling on the motion to reconsider.

DISCUSSION

Wife’s “Counter-Appeal”

Wife has captioned her brief “Appellee Brief and Counter-Appeal to Appellant’s Brief.” Liberally construing her pro se informal brief, as we must, *Mitchell v. Yacko*, 232 Md. App. 624, 643 n.12 (2017), we observe that Wife asks us to modify the circuit court’s judgment in several respects. Thus her brief is, in part, an attempt at a cross-appeal. *See Joseph H. Munson Co. v. Secretary of State*, 294 Md. 160, 167-68 (1982).

Wife did not file a notice of appeal. Consequently, we dismiss her attempted cross-appeal as not permitted by law. *See Kunda v. Morse*, 229 Md. App. 295, 302 n.4 (2016); *Maxwell v. Ingerman*, 107 Md. App. 677, 681 (1996).

Issues Raised by Husband

A. Valuation of Property Titled in Wife’s Name

Husband argues that the circuit court incorrectly valued a piece of property that is titled in Wife’s name. The circuit court considered and rejected this contention in denying Husband’s motion for reconsideration.

In brief, the circuit court accepted the valuation proposed by Wife and rejected the valuation proposed by Husband. We must uphold that factual finding unless it is clearly erroneous. Md. Rule 8-131(c). Because an owner of a property may opine as to its value (*see, e.g., Abdullahi v. Zanini*, 241 Md. App. 372, 413 (2019)), the court’s finding is not clearly erroneous. *St. Cyr v. St. Cyr*, 228 Md. App. 163, 180 (2016). Although the record contains evidence that would have supported a different valuation, the court was not required to credit it.

B. Husband’s Tax Debts

Husband asserts that he has over \$18,000.00 in unpaid tax obligations. He attributes the obligations to his inability to claim the children as dependents in 2023 even though he claims to have had custody of the children half the time that year.

The circuit court also considered and rejected this contention in denying Husband’s motion for reconsideration. “As to the alleged IRS tax debt,” the court wrote,

the evidence was “conflicting.” The court added: “[T]here was no clarity surrounding this claim.”

We interpret the court’s statements to mean that it was simply unpersuaded about the existence or the amount of the alleged tax obligation. It is almost impossible for a court to be clearly erroneous when it is not persuaded of something. *See, e.g., Bricker v. Warch*, 152 Md. App. 119, 137 (2003). In view of the conflicting evidence and the lack of clarity on the subject, the court was not clearly erroneous in deeming itself unpersuaded by Husband’s contentions about the alleged tax obligation.

C. Custody of the Daughters

Husband challenges the court’s decision to award sole legal custody and primary physical custody of the parties’ daughters to Wife.

“We review child custody determinations utilizing three interrelated standards of review.” *J.A.B. v. J.E.D.B.*, 250 Md. App. 234, 246 (2021). We uphold factual findings unless they are clearly erroneous. *See id.* If the court erred as to matters of law, a remand is ordinarily required unless we determine that the error was harmless. *See id.* Finally, if the circuit court reached its conclusions on the basis of sound legal principles and factual findings that are not clearly erroneous, we will disturb the decision only if the court committed a clear abuse of discretion. *See id.*

In determining that joint legal custody was inappropriate, the court expressly found that the parties were unable to communicate and reach shared decisions in the best interests of the children. After reviewing each of the factors pertaining to legal custody, the court found that it was in the daughters’ best interests for Wife to have sole legal

custody and in the son’s best interests for Husband to have sole legal custody. Similarly, after reviewing each of the factors pertaining to physical custody, the court found that it was in the daughters’ best interests for Husband to have physical access to them every other weekend and to have the opportunity to speak to them once a week.

Husband has not directed us to any clearly erroneous factual findings, nor did the court abuse its discretion. The court reached a rational conclusion after evaluating its well-supported factual findings in light of the governing legal principles. Hence, we have no basis to question the decision on custody.

D. Failure to Account for Wife’s 401(k)

Husband contends that, in computing the monetary award, the court failed to account for Wife’s 401(k). He observes that the parties included the 401(k) in their joint statement of marital property, but that the circuit court did not mention the 401(k) when it explained the basis for the monetary award.

The circuit court also considered and rejected this contention in denying Husband’s motion for reconsideration. The court explained that it did consider Wife’s 401(k), that the failure to address that account was “an oversight,” and that it intended for the 401(k) to remain Wife’s sole property. The court went on to explain that, had it divided the 401(k) equally between the parties, it would have exercised its discretion to increase the monetary award to Wife. In short, the court’s oversight did not affect the ultimate conclusion.

In view of the circuit court’s explanation of the basis for its ruling, we see no merit in Husband’s contention concerning the alleged failure to account for the 401(k).

E. Failure to Adopt an Access Schedule for Holidays

Husband contends that the court erred in failing to establish a schedule governing the parties’ access to their children on American and Nepalese holidays. The circuit court considered and rejected this contention as well in denying Husband’s motion for reconsideration. It noted that neither party had made a request for access on holidays or in the summer. Consequently, the court exercised its discretion not to consider Husband’s request in a motion for reconsideration. *See generally Steinhoff v. Sommerfelt*, 144 Md. App. 463, 484 (2002) (stating that a “trial judge has boundless discretion not to indulge this all-too-natural desire to raise issues after the fact that could have been raised earlier”).

Under Maryland Rule 8-131(a), an appellate court will not decide any issue, other than subject matter jurisdiction and (in some instances) personal jurisdiction, “unless it plainly appears by the record to have been raised in or decided by the trial court[.]” The issue of holidays was neither raised in nor decided by the trial court at any time before the motion for reconsideration. Husband did not appeal from the denial of his motion for reconsideration. Thus the issue of access over the holidays is not before us.

F. Reliance on Allegedly False Testimony by Wife

Husband argues that the circuit court based the child support calculations on Wife’s false testimony. The court also considered and rejected this argument in denying the motion for reconsideration.

According to the circuit court, Husband based his contentions on testimony that he did not present and exhibits that he did not attempt to introduce. Just as it exercised its

discretion not to entertain Husband’s belated contentions about access on the holidays, so too did it exercise its discretion to decline to entertain Husband’s belated factual contentions about child support. *See generally Steinhoff v. Sommerfelt*, 144 Md. App. at 484 (stating that “a post-trial motion to reconsider is not a time machine in which to travel back to a recently concluded trial in order to try the case better with hindsight”).

Like the issue of holiday access, this issue was neither raised in nor decided by the circuit court before the motion for reconsideration. Husband did not appeal from the denial of his motion for reconsideration. Thus the issue of access is not before us. Md. Rule 8-131(a).

G. Health Insurance Expenses

Husband argues that, in computing his child support obligation, the court proceeded on the erroneous premise that he pays \$546.00 in health insurance premiums for the children. He argues that he actually pays \$560.44 per month.

The court considered and rejected this argument, too, when it denied the motion for reconsideration. At that time, the court explained that it used the figure that Husband gave in his testimony. The court was not clearly erroneous in relying on Husband’s testimony to establish the amount that he pays for the children’s health insurance.¹

¹ Husband makes additional requests to us that are not properly addressed to this Court. For example, Husband asks “that the Court take appropriate measures to prevent [Wife] and her mother from making disparaging statements about [Husband’s] father.” He asks that we “intervene to prevent [Wife] from misusing the judicial systems of multiple countries by falsely asserting that she has not received child support and lacks a residence.” And he complains that Wife’s “conduct throughout the proceedings raises significant concerns regarding her credibility, transparency, and intent.” We have no power to address these concerns.

**JUDGMENT OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
FOR HOWARD COUNTY AFFIRMED.
COSTS TO BE PAID BY APPELLANT.**