Question 9

Cause and effect is a major function of narrative. Usually, the agents of cause and effect are characters where the viewer seeks to connect events by causal motivation of characters. What motivates Deckard and what events does his motivations cause? What motivates Roy Batty and what events does his motivations cause?

The central character of "Blade Runner" is Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), a world weary blade runner who is involuntarily pulled out of retirement to track down four replicants on the loose in Los Angeles: Pris (Daryl Hannah), Zhora (Joanna Cassidy), Leon Kowalski (Brion James), and their leader Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer). Deckard is initially motivated by what Captain Bryant suggests “ If your not a Blade runner your little people”, which appears to resonate with Deckard who then agrees to investigate, track down and retire each replicant. However, as Deckard moves along further in his investigation and retires the fugitive replicants one-by-one, he comes to understand the desires and emotions that motivate his targets, which are not unlike his own.

Deckard first meets replicant Rachael in Tyrell's office, and she is almost able to pass the Voight-Kampff machine, a lie detector-like device used for identifying replicants. At first, Rachael herself does not realize that she is a replicant, on account of having been implanted with the memories of Mr. Tyrell's niece. However, in her dealings with Deckard, she comes to understand her true origins and her ultimate destiny. And though Rachael is essentially an artificial construct, Deckard sees her as more than merely a collection of genetically engineered tissue and programming-- Rachael also has the very human desires for survival, identity, and growth, and as a result, is deserving of 'more life'. Rachael presents our protagonist with an emotional conundrum he has never battled before: love.

His determination in chasing Zhora and killing her is evident of how he can detach sentiment in favour of cold ruthless killing. However his character is further developed through the emerging romance subplot in the film. As he hunts down and systematically executes each member of a group of androids, Deckard is confronted with the limitations of his fleeting mortality. His character's transformation is two-fold; Roy Batty is the ultimate replicant, smart and strong, and in him Deckard may have met his match. Batty's drive to kill Deckard comes from his desire to live

Led by Batty, the replicants seek 'more life', hoping to break beyond the confines of their inflexible four-year life span. They break into the offices of the Tyrell Corporation in a bid to find out their incept (creation) dates (to understand how much time they have left) and to ask their creator, Dr. Eldon Tyrell for an extension on their short lives. In seeking to go beyond their own limitations, cheating death and finding the secret to immortality, the replicants are an embodiment of the fleetingness of the human condition-- a point driven home to Deckard in the rooftop battle he has with Batty in the film's climax. As he watches Batty shutdown as a result of having 'no more time', Deckard comes to understand that his own desire for survival is no different than that of the replicants he has 'retired'.

Deckard then acts upon this newfound perspective by helping Rachael (Sean Young), escape from possible 'retirement'.