Contemporary world politics is structured around the world order of nation-states in turn founded largely upon a Newtonian cosmology and an associated worldview. I develop a conceptual framework around the ‘epistemic engine’ which organizes and circulates the cosmological and institutional structures of Enlightenment modernity. Subsequently, I explore how the imperial Chinese world order—functional until at least the late 19th century—reveals a different cosmology shaping a different world order and politics. I also explore the contemporary PRC view of the world order probing the extent to which its historical experiences can be seen to re-shape the hegemonic epistemic engine. In the final section, I draw from a paradigm of ‘oceanic temporality’ to grasp counter-finalities generated by the epistemic engine on the earth and the ocean itself. Can the counter-flows of social movements allow us to imagine a post-Enlightenment, planetary cosmology?

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