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Henry David Thoreau, born 200 years ago next July, is widely regarded as America’s first environmental guru. This iconic status, however, was long in coming and, in many ways, ironic. Thoreau was viewed by most of his contemporaries as a highly eccentric crank, his best friends being the children who followed him around the Concord woods gathering huckleberries. Thoreau’s life and writings stood against the current of scientism that prevailed in his time and that continues to define our intellectual culture. In 1849, the year that Thoreau began his habit of taking afternoon walks, he anticipates this trend, writing: “Science applies a finite rule to the infinite & is what you can weigh & measure & bring away. Its sun no longer dazzles us and fills the universe with light.”