Émile Durkheim`s work forms the cornerstone of Alexander’s cultural sociology, to the point where it becomes virtually impossible to discern precisely where the process of reinterpretation stops and the construction of a new theory begins. In this article I aim to show the cardinal points of Alexander’s reading of Durkheim’s work, discussing how certain concepts and arguments are carefully selected in order to establish the bases of the strong program in cultural sociology, including in its ‘performative turn.’ In so doing, I highlight both strong and weak points in his reading of Durkheim’s texts, showing that there is an important expression of its ‘spirit’ even when he is not faithful to its ‘letter.’ In short, Alexander’s approach to Durkheim, a translation capable of actualizing its potentialities, purges his work of positivistic premises and adapts his theory to a comprehension of the social world, understood as a mesh of socially created and shared meanings.